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Don't be too harsh on political correctness...

WHILE there is almost no doubt that political correctness has, as the common refrain claims, gone too far, we would all do well to remember why such drastic action is required.

In the lifetime of many of us, attitudes to racism, for example, have almost completely transformed. Where once common derogatory terms would be heard on the TV or in the street, today it is rare. Let's not pretend it's unheard of, but it is dramatically reduced.

More to the point, apart from the most ignorant and neanderthal, it is not simply a case of not saying it, but a genuine acceptance that in our modern world, to judge someone by the colour of their skin is ridiculous.

Therefore, that so-called 'political correctness' has been necessary as a stick to beat the thick with; to make it clear to them that the way they think is wrong and that passing such views to their children is equally as inexcusable.

Yet, of course, it happens. The sight of Chelsea 'fans' preventing a black man in Paris getting on a train was shocking. What was refreshing, this time around, is that everyone didn't just condemn because they knew it was the right thing to do, but condemned because they couldn't believe apes with such out-dated attitudes still existed. That's progress.

Political correctness goes wrong when people can no longer feel they can disagree or dislike someone due to the colour of their skin. White or black, we are all capable of rubbing people up the wrong way, being rude, or acting like buffoons.

But being 'PC' has battered down a lack of tolerance over the years and we should never forget the benefits of that. Enjoy your weekend.

Editor **Chris Britcher**

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IPCC recover tasers and baton in shooting probe

By Maria Chiorando
maria.chiorando@archant.co.uk

INVESTIGATION: Relates to incident in Hersden earlier this month

POLICE watchdog the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) this week confirmed it would be conducting a full investigation into an incident which saw a 40-year-old shot by police amid suspicions he had stabbed his daughter.

It is also examining a taser and baton launcher used by police during the incident.

Marc Traylor was shot at around 1am on February 9 following a tense two-hour stand-off with police officers at a property in Hersden near Canterbury.

He was rushed to hospital were he remains in a critical condition.

Every police shooting is automatically refered to the IPCC to ensure correct steps were taken.

Investigators have recovered for testing a police issue handgun, two Tasers and a baton launcher that were used during the incident.

The 16-year-old girl - who attends a Canterbury grammar school - had suffered a number of stab wounds and was also taken to hospital.

She is making good progress and is recovering well.

During the incident the girl suffered a number of injuries. They were both taken to hospital, where the man remains in a critical condition.

IPCC investigators went to the scene and as is routine arranged for an independent ballistics expert to examine the address.

The IPCC oversaw the recovery of evidence from the address and have conducted house to house enquiries.

The firearms officers have provided accounts to the IPCC and are being treated as significant witnesses.

IPCC commissioner Mary Cunneen, said: "My thoughts are with all those involved in this serious incident. Our investigators have met with the family to explain our role and we will keep them updated as our investigation progresses.

"Although incidents of this nature are rare, where someone is shot by the police it is right that it is subject to rigorous independent scrutiny. We have made good progress recovering evidence that will help provide an understanding of what happened."

Police had originally been called at around 11.20pm on Sunday, February 8. As part of the response, armed police officers were also deployed to the scene.

Blow as another major school confirms it is to close due to numbers

THE Oasis Academy Hextable near Sevenoaks is to close its doors at the end of the current academic year - with all but a handful of students transferring to other local schools in September.

The decision follows another poor showing in the recent school league tables and declining numbers attending.

With school funding derived from the number of students enrolling, it made the school unviable.

It is the second major secondary school to close its doors in the space of a year. This time last year Kent County Council announced it was shutting the Chaucer school in Canterbury.

The Oasis Academy is run by the charitable Oasis Community Learning organisation that is also responsible for two other academies in Kent- one on Sheppey and one in Gillingham.

A spokesperson, on behalf of the board of Oasis Community Learning says: "It is with regret that we have made the difficult decision to close Oasis Academy Hextable. With the exception of current Year 10 and Year 12 students, the existing student body will transfer to nearby schools in September 2015. The academy will finally close at the end of academic year 2015/2016. Making this decision has been one of the most difficult in the history of Oasis.

"Oasis took over the failing Hextable School in 2013. But student numbers have continued to dip. And with projected student numbers set to continue to decline in the near future, before rising again, academy chiefs say that even by 2018 the school would still be operating only at half its capacity."

Students in Years 10 and 12 will continue at the academy for a further academic year in order to enable them to complete their GCSE and post-16 courses.

KCC wrote to all parents during the week offering them alternative places for their children.

Cameron support for plans to expand grammar to town

PRIME minister David Cameron has given campaigners pushing for the expansion of a grammar school in Sevenoaks a boost after saying he "strongly supports" such moves.

While there is a ban on building any new grammars, Tonbridge's Weald of Kent Grammar School is pushing ahead with plans to open an annexe in the town.

Sevenoaks is the only major town in Kent not to have a grammar. The Weald of Kent proposal, backed by Kent County Council, would see a girls only annexe opened.

During a visit to East Sussex, Mr Cameron said: "I strongly support the right of all good schools to expand.

"I think that's very important and that should include grammar schools."

Big crowds flock to bid final farewell to tragic Pat Lamb

MOURNERS gathered to pay a final farewell to tragic Pat Lamb at his funeral this week.

Crowds gathered on Thursday to pay their final respects to the 28-year-old who went missing after a night out in Maidstone in December. His disappearance sparked a major public appeal for information.

Mr Lamb, who lived in Greenhithe with his girlfriend, was last seen walking towards the River Medway.

His body was eventually recovered at Cuxton Marina on January 10. An inquest has been opened and adjourned until April 1.

Friends and family gathered at Barham Crematorium near Canterbury for the service.

Mr Lamb grew up in Whitstable.

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Stories which made the headlines @kentnews.co.uk during the past week

Brave mum who saved daughter is honoured

A COURAGEOUS mother who fought off an intruder threatening to shoot her 10-year-old daughter unless he was given money, has received a top commendation award from Kent Police.

Julia Rogers and her daughter Lily were sleeping in their Dartford home when a man broke in claiming he had a gun and demanding money.

Mrs Rogers and her son Danny, 18, leapt to Lily's defence and fought the burglar out of her house before calling the police, just after 5.30am on May 11 2014.

The man was later arrested and jailed.

Mrs Rogers, Lily and Danny Adams were recognised for their bravery when they received the Chief Constable's Commendation at a Kent Police ceremony.

Hooligans run riot as trouble erupts at crunch derby day football clash

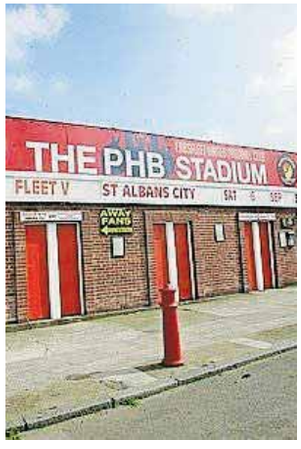
By Chris Britcher
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

CLUB chiefs at senior non-league football side Ebbsfleet United are counting the cost after hooliganism broke out at its home derby with Bromley on Tuesday night.

'Significant' damage was done to to Stonebridge Road as an element of Bromley fans attacked Ebbsfleet supporters and stewards as Bromley won the Conference South clash 1-0.

In addition, cars in the main car park were damaged, glass deliberately smashed under wheels, and seats ripped out. Some homes near the ground were also attacked.

Ebbsfleet vice chairman Peter Varney said: "Significant damage was done to the Stonebridge Road stadium by so-called Bromley supporters and a number of Ebbsfleet supporters and stewards were attacked. There were a number of Bromley supporters ejected during the match. After the match, cars owned by local residents were also damaged.



TROUBLE: Stonebridge Road

"We have a lot of photgraphic evidence and will be working with Bromley FC and the police to ensure these thugs are dealt with through the courts."

Ashley Reading, co-chairman of Bromley, added: "We totally condemn the unacceptable behaviour of the perpertrators of the reported incidents before, during and after the game. We will fully support Ebbsfleet United and the local police in every way we can.

"We do not and will not tolerate any behaviour of this kind. We will also be carrying out our own investigation."

Meanwhile, a charity donation page has been set up to help fund the repair bills for the damaged caused to cars and property by those living nearby.

Football Exclusives, a non-league media outlet, have set up a JustGiving page.

Founder Mike Bandry said: "As non-league football fans ourselves, we know that mindless acts of vandalism are very rare and that every non-league football club harbours a unique selfless community."

To donate: www.justgiving.com/yimby/NonLeagueCommunity.

SINGER: Sound of Celine too much

Celine Dion fan fined for blaring music

A NOISY neighbour who blasted out Celine Dion songs has been fined and had thousands of pounds worth of equipment removed.

Gareth Davies, 48, of Hone Street, Strood, was found guilty of seven breaches of a noise abatement notice when he appeared before Dartford Magistrates' Court.

Davies first had equipment seized in March 2014 after he was heard playing music, including Celine Dion's Titanic hit, My Heart Will Go On.

It was returned but in June 2014 music was blaring from Davies' home including Celine Dion again and other tracks from Madness, The Cure, The Smiths, James Brown and some classical numbers.

Technology worth around £3,000 was seized including Sony PlayStations, three flat screen TVs, Apple MacBook Air, 5 Bose speakers, a Bose power speaker system, a Bose control console, an Apple iPod touch and Bose docking station, a Sony DVD player and Sony Soundbar.

Magistrates ordered the equipment be forfeited.

Davies was fined £50 on each of the charges and ordered to pay £500 costs. In total he will have to pay back £870.

Eurostar's fast fresh trains set for service

BRAND new state-of-the-art high-speed trains will soon be seen flying through the Kent countryside after Eurostar confirmed they will be coming into service by the end of the year.

The e320 trains will be able to boost capacity per train by 20 per cent and be capable of hitting speeds of up to 200mph.

It comes as German firm Deutsche Bahn continues to push ahead with plans to operate a rival high-speed continental service with a route from Berlin to London. That is expected to begin at some point next year.

Eurostar, which runs services from St Pancras, via Ebbsfleet and Ashford to Paris and Brussels, also confirmed passenger numbers were up three per cent last year, with 10.4m using the service in 2014.

Bosses put the increase down to a rise in business confidence in the UK prompting more business trips. More than 150m people have used the service since it started in 1994.

Coxon rejoins Blur for latest comeback gig

BLUR's Graham Coxon has reunited with the band as they made a surprise announcement this week of a new album and major open-air concert this summer.

The Britpop band - best remembered for their big-selling Parklife album - confirmed they would play at Hyde Park in June and release their first album, The Magic Whip, in 12 years.

But Mr Coxon, who lives in a farmhouse near Canterbury, played only a minor role in 2003's Think Tank album. Therefore, the new album, released at the end of April, will be the first with the full original band line-up for 16 years.

Since quitting the band, he has enjoyed a busy solo career, releasing a host of critically well -received albums.

Mr Coxon has performed a number of festival shows in the county during his solo career - playing at Canterbury's Lounge on the Farm and the Paddock Wood Hop Farm Festival.

Blur, who played at Margate's Winter Gardens in 2012 during a tour of small venues, play Hyde Park on June 20.

Cruel animal fighting cases are on the rise

ORGANISED animal fighting figures are on the rise, according to the RSPCA, with Kent in the top five counties in England when it comes to the number of incidents.

There was a total of 594 calls to the charity in 2014 to report incidents or information connected to organised animal fighting, compared to 449 in 2010 - an increase of nearly 33 per cent.

Kent had 26 calls - putting it behind only the West Midlands (48), Greater London (36), Greater Manchester (35) and Lancashire (27).

Chief inspector Ian Briggs, from the RSPCA's special operations unit, said: "People look at me with amazement when I tell them about some of the things I've seen and heard of when it comes to dogfighting and cockfighting. Some people simply can't believe it still happens, but it does and these new figures show that it is as much a problem now, if not more, than any other point in recent years.

Turn to pages 14-16 inside this edition for a special report on the live animal export trade.

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agenda

What will make next week's headlines…

Jobs chance courtesy of city's 'super sewer'

AN event takes place at Chatham Maritime on Tuesday highlighting the range of jobs up for grabs as a consequence of the Thames Tideway Tunnel project.

It is dubbed London's 'super sewer' and will be the UK's biggest engineering project. It will upgrade the capital's antiquated sewerage system to cope with demands going into the 22nd century.

As a consequence, thousands of new jobs and hundreds of apprenticeships are to be created.

Folkestone-based Maritime.com is partnering in the recruitment process and will be hosting the Thames Tideway Connect event on

February 24 at the Hawke Building, at the University of Greenwich from noon to 4.30pm. Similiar events in London and Essex will take place during March, April and May.

Fire crews to walk out in strike action this week

FIRE crews will walk out on the latest 24-hour strike on Wednesday as part of a dispute over pension payments.

The Fire Brigade Union (FBU) will call members out from 7am on Wednesday, February 25.

Sean Bone-Knell, director of operations at Kent Fire & Rescue Service, said: "This is a national dispute between the FBU and the Government. KFRS is asking you to keep your home or business safe during the strike by taking extra precautions, however, in the event of a fire the advice remains the same: get out, stay out and call 999, you will get an emergency response."

...also

Tories to pick candidate

FOUR hopefuls wanting to replace Hugh Robertson as Faversham and Mid Kent Tory candidate will meet members to be whittled down to one on Tuesday.

The event will take place at the Mercure Maidstone Great Danes Hotel.

Train works hit services

PLANNED engineering work will affect services between Orpington and Tonbridge this weekend.

A replacement bus service will run from 1.45am on Sunday to 4am on Monday, with no services calling at four stations.

M25 junction work

A £100m road improvement project starts next weekend.

The interchange between the A13 and the M25 at junction 30 near Thurrock in Essex will be overhauled to reduce congestion and improve safety.

Vision for county police

POLICE and crime commissioner Ann Barnes will address Thanet District Council on Thursday.

Mrs Barnes will be joined by the deputy chief constable, and they will share their joint vision for policing in Kent.

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Getting ready for blast off on a one-way trip to Mars

Alison Rigby is one of 100 worldwide to be on a shortlist to help colonise planet

A SCHOOL laboratory technician has been named on the shortlist for a bizarre one-way trip to Mars in a bid to colonise the planet and be part of the most ambitious reality TV show yet.

Alison Rigby, 35, from Beckenham, was one of 200,000 people from around the world who put their name forward to be part of the Mars One project.

The brainchild of Dutch businessman Bas Landsdorp, it hopes to raise an estimated £6billion ahead of its launch within the next 10 years.

Its aim is to establish a permanent human settlement on the Red Planet.

It intends to send crews of four into space every two years - the first in 2024. The journey time alone will take around eight months.

However, because it will be impossible to blast off once they land on the planet's surface, there is no chance of returning.

Money will be raised over the coming years, with a key deal being selling TV rights.

And if Star Trek fan Dr Rigby makes the final cut, she says she is prepared to make the sacrifice of never seeing friends, family, or her boyfriend, again.

She said: "I say we are all going to die, but it's important what you do before you die inspires."

She told KoS her boyfriend Casper Froberg is happy for her, adding: "He is very proud of me and very supportive. He thinks it is a magical opportunity.

"He does understand there is an inevitability about it."

Having signed up in 2013, the chemistry expert said: "I am a science geek. There are only two barriers to this flight not actually happening. One is financial and is technological – if we can surmount those, there is nothing stopping it. The will is behind it.

"What is being planned sounds like it is beyond comprehension – it's a bit like Scott's expedition to the Antarctic, when he was overwhelmed with men despite the dangers.

"People still want to test themselves today and this is the perfect example with over 200,000 putting their names down."

READY: Alison Rigby, 35, is looking forward to the flight

Now shortlisted and ready for the next round of selection, she said: "I have always been interested in science as I have an insatiable curiosity about the world around me which I can begin to understand through the sciences. I am working as a science laboratory technician and I love what I do. I especially like preparing A-Level experiments for the students.

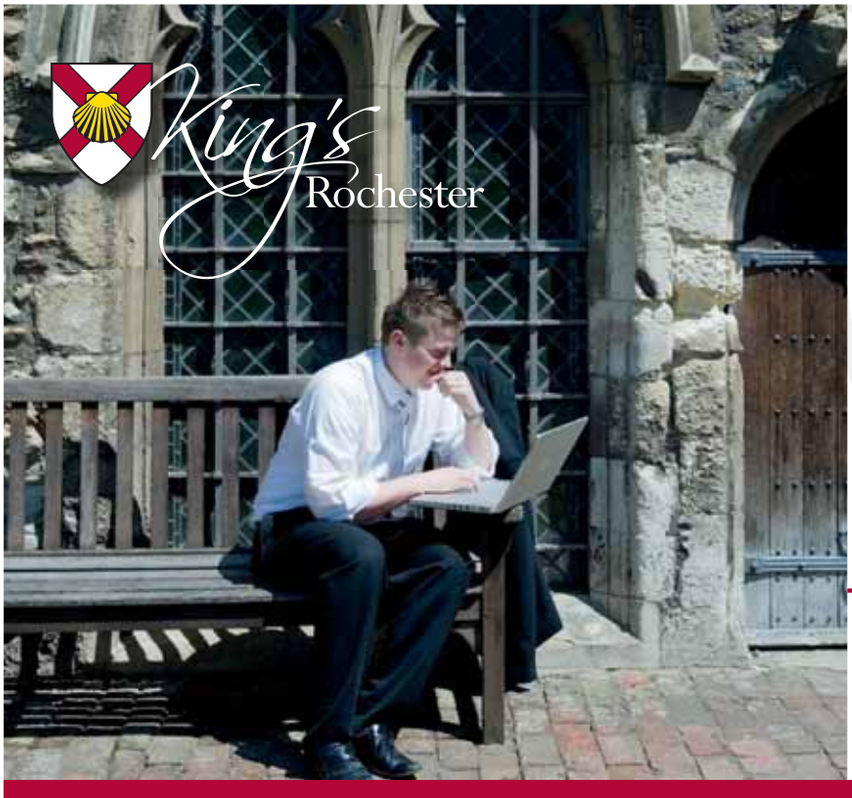
She works at the Sedgehill School in Lewisham.

She adds: "My family is very close-knit and supportive, but they are still worried about the prospect of me going to Mars.

"I can understand their concerns; as time passes I realise more and more how deeply they feel for me and I for them. It's going to be difficult for my mum Bernadette and my three brothers. However as a potential representative of humanity on Mars I feel I have a responsibility to far more people.

"I believe the Mars One project and indeed every endeavour that will contribute to humanity becoming a space-faring, multiplanet species is of vital importance to the long term survival of our species. That is why I am so happy to educate and inform people about the mission."

MISSION: This is how Mars One project hopes the colony will look



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SPACE: Comfort for astronauts as they set up a base on the Red Planet (top)

With dwindling natural resources here on Earth, and growing concerns over rising populations, Dr Rigby said she thinks it is time for humans to start living somewhere else, and believes she has skills to make that happen.

She said: "I am so proud to have been selected for round three of Mars One."

That will be when this shortlist of 100 will be whittled down to just 24.

Currently there are just five British people on the 100-strong shortlist.

She told CNN: "I have always been interested in space; I grew up in the 80s watching shuttle launches, but always used to think that space travel was just for the Americans. When the opportunity came up I had to put my name forward."

However, the mission is by no means a guarantee.

A raft of experts around the world have examined the project and concluded the entire mission is fraught with danger.

Even if the mission to reach the planet is successful, being able to survive on a plant without an atmosphere and with high radiation levels, let along to start a colony there and produce suitable levels of food, will be extremely difficult.

Unmanned test flights are scheduled to begin as early as 2018.

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Rocky road for Ukip as media assaults deflect defection boost

A Channel 4 drama depicting a Ukip victory in the general election and the broadcast tonight of BBC documentary with racist remarks, overshadowed decision by local Labour's Harriet Yeo to quit party

A HIGH-profile resignation, riots, midnight raids and Nigel Farage as prime minister ... it's been quite a week for Ukip.

Some of the above may not have happened outside a Channel 4 drama, but the party's hogging of the political limelight shows no signs of slowing.

Just that where once all the headlines were of Ukip being a breath of fresh air, there is a growing sense that the party's appeal is turning a little stale.

A somewhat sensationalist drama on Channel 4 last Monday painted a vision of an imminent future where Westerham's Nigel Farage became prime minister. It was no rose-tinted view.

And then tonight (Sunday) a BBC documentary will be aired examining the Ukip campaign team in South Thanet - where Mr Farage will be seeking a seat at Westminster. Shortly after it was filmed, one Ukip activist had to be expelled from the party after she made racist remarks.

The only slight positive for the party was news that the former leader of the Labour group on Ashford Borough Council was quitting the party. Only Ukip couldn't really make great political capital as she opted not to ditch her Labour membership to join Mr Farage's party, saying merely that she would 'support Ukip' in May.

Harriet Yeo's departure from Labour will have come as no surprise to any of those in the group. It had long been expected she would defect to Ukip in the months prior to the general election.

Her daughter, Angharad, also quit Labour to run, albeit unsuccessfully, for Ukip in the Kent County Council elections in 2013.

She welcomed news of her mother's departure by tweeting: "Pleased that mummsy will be supporting Ukip in 2015 election."

Ms Yeo, a former chairwoman of Labour's National Executive Committee and ex-leader of the TSSA trade union, had been a Labour member for three decades.

She ran for the party in the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in 2012 - picking up just 11 per cent of the vote and coming a distant third behind the Conservative candidate Craig Mackinlay and eventual winner Ann Barnes.

Speaking to KoS this week, she said she was leaving Labour over the party's position on Europe – and that the seeds of her departure had been sown as far back as the Kent PCC elections.

"I went across the whole county knocking on doors and talking to people about how they were being affected by things," Ms Yeo said.

"But I have only been thinking about it seriously for the past two or three months.

"People want a say on whether they are in or out of Europe. They want to make a democratic decision on the future of the country.

"Labour won't talk about it, and I think the Tories are fudging it, but the people I speak to in this area want a referendum and it is something that could hold Labour back."

"Although Nigel Farage is ex-public school, he talks the same language as people on the doorstep. He isn't a sanitised, identikit politician.

"Ukip have the courage of their convictions. They speak about what's important to them. Politicians both blue and red have lost their passion for politics. It's just about beating the other party."

So how did she feel swapping her red colours for purple? "It felt uncomfortable and scary," Ms Yeo said.

"Some people have been quite vile, which I fully expected, although I have been pleasantly surprised by people I thought were acquaintances who turned out to be friends.

"It is not my intention at the moment to join another party, but I wouldn't rule it out in the future."

It was widely reported, although Labour did not confirm, that Ms Yeo was removed from her position as Labour group leader on Ashford council last week amid claims of not attending meetings or dealing with casework. She was also deselected as a local election candidate.

She will serve as an Independent councillor.

"I got the letter about being deselected on Wednesday afternoon. I had heard about it from the press," she said.

"I heard about my removal as leader from another councillor. The rule book was thrown away. There was no meeting with me and no forms were signed; the paperwork needed to have a change of leader arrived about six days after they had announced it to the council.

"I had decided not to join Ukip, but because Labour had behaved so badly, I decided I couldn't be a part of the organisation anymore. I can't go out canvassing as I have had three major operations in four years and I physically can't do it.

"There were a couple of cases that seemed to have slipped through when I had my last operation, but over four years we are talking two or three."

Ukip leader Nigel Farage said he was "delighted" that Ms Yeo had pledged her support.

"We have been making big inroads into the Labour vote in Kent, but whenever I say that I am greeted with a degree of skepticism," he said.

"I have been talking to Harriet for months. The Labour Party has been a huge part of her life and it has been a very big decision for her."

A Labour Party spokesman said: "The vast majority of the party are united behind our position on Europe, believing Britain's best interests are served by staying in a reformed EU."

SWITCH: Harriet Yeo (right) has ditched Labour to lend her support to Ukip in May's election

CONTROVERSIAL DOCUMENTARY AIRS TONIGHT

AFTER benefitting from plenty of good publicity in recent years, it was perhaps only a matter of time before the worm turned.

So Channel 4's drama on Monday night - Ukip: The First 100 Days - proved quite a bite.

It imagined what could happen if Ukip won the general election and Nigel Farage was prime minister. After the final credits started rolling, so did the complaints.

More than 1,000 lodged complaints to media watchdog Ofcom and broadcaster Channel 4.

They complained about depictions of night raids on suspected illegal immigrants and as opponents of Ukip and right-wing groups clashed in the street. It even suggested the smoking ban in pubs would be lifted.

Ofcom says it is now examining the complaints before deciding whether to take any action.

Despite his propensity for seeing the funny side of most things, Nigel Farage was not amused.

"Look at the number of complaints," he said. "A lot of people are outraged that Ukip voters are being characterised in this way – it is utter nonsense.

"Although getting rid of the smoking ban would be rather fun."

Even Mr Farage's rival at the general election, South Thanet Conservative candidate Craig Mackinlay, described it as "a bit flimsy".

He said: "It was a bit of an odd choice of programme. I think there was a lot more about Ukip they could have focused on, which would have been better for the public. For example, there are so many holes in their manifesto which I don't think they are going to plug."

But Vince Maple, Labour leader on Medway Council, said the programme "posed some interesting questions about the divisive nature of Ukip's policies".

A second programme about the party, a documentary entitled Meet the Ukippers, which focuses on activists in Thanet, will air on BBC2 tonight (Sunday) at 10pm.

This is the programme for which councillor Rozanne Duncan was being filmed when she said something which caused her to be immediately expelled from the party.

The BBC has never confirmed what her comments, which may or may not appear in the programme, were but they have been described as "jaw-droppingly racist".

Mrs Duncan is not appealing against her expulsion, but she says she is upset at the way she has been treated.

In a letter to Ukip chairman Steve Crowther she wrote: "I've been expelled from Ukip without being offered the courtesy of a right to reply via a disciplinary hearing. I'm incensed.

"In no way was it my intention to cause offence, but everyone has their own lines and people draw them in different places. Other members of Ukip are on record as having made the most racial and insulting remarks, yet although they may or may not have been disciplined, they haven't been expelled, so I'd be interested to know what your hidden agenda is in expelling me."

Mr Farage said: "I haven't seen the programme, but I'm aware that often people don't come out in their best light."

SITE: This is where the Lodge Hill development would be situated

Battle of Lodge Hill flaps up to Westminster for final approval

Campaigners have billed it as a fight between nature and development, but are new homes essential to ease a 20,000 strong housing waiting list? **Sarah Linney** examines the controversial Lodge Hill plans

IT IS the biggest planning application anyone can recall coming before Medway Council, and it is certainly one of the most controversial.

The proposed development of 5,000 homes at Lodge Hill, a brown and greenfield site centred on the former Army base at Chattenden, has split the electorate down the middle. Everyone has an opinion. It's either a terrible, wanton destruction of beautiful countryside and vital wildlife habitats – or a desperately-needed solution to Medway's housing crisis.

What's more, it has been rumbling on now for years, with a host of high profile twists and turns.

It promises to provide much needed homes and deliver the infrastructure projects such as schools and other facilities which, during the construction process at least, will create 5,000 jobs.

Politically, it has broad cross-party support through the planning process...but with the general election looming on the horizon candidates of the key parties are taking a different stance.

The fact the land sits in the Rochester and Strood constituency, home of Tory defector and now Ukip's one and only Kent MP Mark Reckless - means it has become more of a political hot potato than before.

So just why does it continue to make the headlines.

In 2013, the Government's Planning Inspectorate threw out Medway Council's entire housing strategy as a consequence of the inclusion of the Lodge Hill scheme.

It pointed, in particular, to the issue of nightingales on the site.

In dramatic decline, the proposed site hosts around one per cent of the total population of the English Nightingale.

The council insists they can be moved, wildlife chiefs suggest otherwise.

Revamped plans found themselves once again put before the unitary authority last September - and a planning application approved, despite hundreds of letters of objection.

Unsurprisingly, given its previous rejection, it has been called in to be re-examined by Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Eric Pickles. A self-confessed birdwater, at the heart of the argument will be the protection afforded to a site classified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

This means that the land is protected because of its biological or geographical significance.

> **"The idea the nightingales can be given little kit bags and passports to go to Essex is ludicrous."**
>
> **Clive Gregory,**
> Green Party member

Development on SSSIs is not normally allowed and their protection is supposed to be enshrined in council policy.

Grass snakes, adders, slowworms, bats and badgers are found on the part-woodland, part-grassland site.

Hence the objections to the development from, among others, the RSPB, the Woodland Trust, Kent Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation, Buglife International and the Dickens Countryside Protection Society.

Explains Rolf Williams from the RSPB: "If Lodge Hill goes ahead, it says the government's own planning policy doesn't have any teeth.

"It would set a precedent, and other SSSIs might be open to threats. You can't argue for the destruction of an SSSI without first demonstrating that it can't be avoided, and the council has failed to do that.

"They've never satisfied anyone other than themselves over this, which is why the inspector threw out their core strategy."

But what about these nightingales?

Says Mr Williams: "It's really difficult to get the conditions right for nightingales to breed.

"If it was easy, the RSPB would have done it already. We wouldn't have lost nine out of ten nightingales in my lifetime.

"How it is that Medway Council feels they know more about the science of Lodge Hill than all the other NGOs [non-government organisations], I don't know."

With some 20,000 people on Medway's housing waiting list, the demand for housing is clearly enormous. Medway Council is convinced Lodge Hill will go a long way to easing that.

Clive Gregory, the Green Party's prospective parliamentary candidate for Rochester and Strood, however, points out, if you can't afford a house, then you can't afford a house, no matter how many of them there are.

"All that's going to happen is that more people will move into Medway - probably people from London, who are the only ones who can afford this stuff," he said.

"They are not looking at the sort of people who really need help. People in sub-standard accommodation are not going to get any help from this at all. There will be the same quantity of needy people.

"The council's concept of affordable is not what most people would consider affordable. Most people can't afford to get a £150,000 mortgage.

"There is no way of corroborating the 20,000 figure or knowing who came up with it. All this is is a money-making exercise for Land Securities."

Land Securities is the owner of the land and behind the project.

Adds Mr Gregory: "The SSSI system is there to protect the land for future generations. The idea the nightingales can be given little kit bags and passports to go to Essex is ludicrous.

The scheme had cross-party support on the planning committee – but although the council which is pushing it forward is Conservative-run, the Tory general election candidate for Rochester and Strood, Kelly Tolhurst, is opposed to the development.

She says people in the area were not only concerned about building on an SSSI, but about the strain 5,000 homes could put on health, education and transport in Medway - especially if facilities promised at the start did not materialise.

"A new housing development should not impact on the people already living there – who are already experiencing pressures and are very concerned about the future delivery of the infrastructure," Miss Tolhurst said.

"We have people who are struggling to see their GP, or are looking for school places on the Hoo peninsula - and I don't believe the changes to the roads go far enough for a development of that size. Look at the pressures Medway Hospital is under - a 5,000-home development could mean 25,000 more people using the hospital.

"Lodge Hill could take 15 years to build, and what gets agreed now may be very different in 15 years' time - you see developers going back to planning committees to change the plans that were originally agreed.

"We all understand the need to build more houses, but they should be spread across Medway."

Ukip MP Mark Reckless agreed. "There are much better areas to build houses than on a bird sanctuary – like Rochester riverside, Strood riverside, and the old Fintrade site," he said.

"Sites which have been classified for business but in which there is no business interest could be used for housing instead."

However, Labour prospective parliamentary candidate Naushabah Khan is in favour of the development. She insists to reject the plans will simply create other problems elsewhere.

She says: "We have serious issues in Medway. The housing waiting list is not something we can shy away from.

"And if we don't build at Lodge Hill, where are we going to put those houses? We will end up with piecemeal developments and no infrastructure.

"There isn't a magic solution. It's so difficult, and so expensive, to get onto the housing ladder. I don't own a house.

"This was an Army-owned site. It had tanks on it. It is 80 per cent brownfield and there are around 750 acres of land for the nightingales to move to."

• **What do you think? Share your views and join the debate. Write to: The Editor, KoS, Kent House, 81 Station Road, Ashford TN23 1PP. Or email us at editorial@kosmedia.co.uk.**

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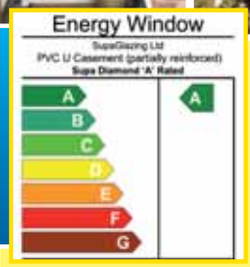

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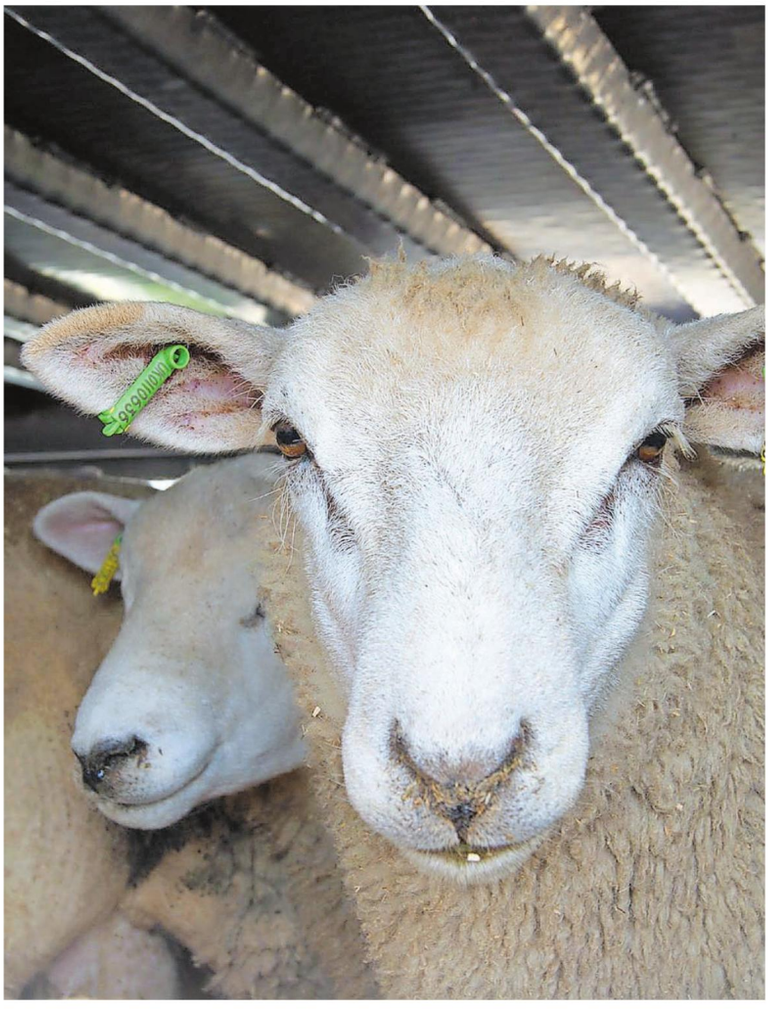

JOURNEY: Tempers continue to fray over transportation of live animals from Kent's ports

Sailing into the stormy waters of live exports

It is the controversy which will simply not go away. **Maria Chiorando** heads to Ramsgate to watch the animal trucks clash with protestors

IT IS morning at the entrance to Ramsgate Port.

The air is chilly.

Some five trucks are stationary, waiting to enter the complex. From inside hundreds of pairs of eyes peer out into the morning sun. The eerie sound of bleating sheep fills the air.

Ahead of the lorries are protestors sitting in the middle of the road. The lorry drivers sit in their cabins. Stoney-faced.

The protestors shout, their voices mingling with the animals'.

Welcome to the world of live animal exports - a trade which, as the stand-off on a Thanet street neatly demonstrates, is one which divides opinion. More often than not, that opinion is set firmly against it.

The protestors don't necessarily oppose British meat being shipped abroad. What they do object to is animals being forced into cramped conditions and put on long cross-Channel boat journeys to the Continent. Their welfare, they claim, is being ignored for commercial gain.

Rather the animals travel on the hook - in other words slaughtered here - than by hoof.

It's hard not to see their point. Yet under EU law, live export is a legitimate trade and one which many farmers rely on for their livelihoods.

Frank Langrish is a spokesman for the National Farmers' Union and is a large-scale livestock farmer and transporter. He explains:

"The sheep have a higher value in Europe than here, and a much higher value if they are fattened and slaughtered in those countries, because the quality of these animals is higher.

"The French flock has been reducing over the last few years, so we can supply that market.

"And we might as well say it - there is a high demand for halal meat in Europe."

Halal meat sees an animal hung and its throat slit in accordance to Islamic tradition. Controversially, the animal should not be stunned.

An RSPCA survey last year suggested seven out of 10 Brits said animals should be slaughtered in their country of origin.

It is also a red-hot political potato which Kent has found itself at the heart of. The local authorities and politicians have made it clear they don't want Ramsgate to host the shipments. And when it moved to Dover, it received the same ice cold response. Yet, as a legitimate trade, there is no way to prevent it.

Ian Driver, Green Party councillor in Thanet and standing for the party in the South Thanet general election (pitting him against Nigel Farage amongst others) is no stranger to a bit of rabble rousing. But he is adamant this trade is one which has to be stopped on ethical and moral grounds.

"The trade is an abomination," he says. "I find it incredible to believe that in the 21st century we still allow legally a cruel, barbaric, medieval trade that should have been banned hundreds of years ago. It's got to be stopped.

"I defy anybody to come down here, to see these lorries, to see the animals crushed together for hours, in their own urine, in their faeces – to smell that, to see that, to listen to the animals and say it's not cruel.

"The inspectors who are meant to check these animals are not doing a proper job. Animals that are not fit to travel are travelling."

The inspectors he refers to are government employees, who have an obligation to check one in three of the animals, then make a decision as to whether they are fit to travel.

Standing by the wire fence of the port, you are afforded a clear view to where the trucks are parked before being loaded. The inspectors appeared, from what I could see, to spend just a few moments peering through the slats in the wagons at the 800 or so sheep before they were waved on to the boat. Perhaps further checks were carried out - but it is this apparent disregard, in front of the protestors, which causes tempers to fray.

The inspections are one of the laws put in place to protect the animals. Legislation includes the EU's Council Regulation 1/2005 and the UK's Animal Welfare Act 2006. Having studied the effectiveness of the legislation, the European Commission found that it had a beneficial impact on the welfare of animals during transport, but that standards could be higher. Rather than change the law, they felt that better enforcement would be more effective.

Mr Langrish claims these regulations ensure the animals travel in some degree of comfort, with access to both food and water, and proper welfare measures in place.

"If the laws weren't adhered to," he says, "there would be prosecutions."

In fact, there have been prosecutions: Tomas Lomas, convicted criminal and the owner of Channel Live

Continued on page 16

ANTI: A stuffed cow looks to hammer home the message at the port

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EXPORTS THROUGH DOVER AND RAMSGATE PORTS

Neither Thanet District Council nor the Dover Harbour Board want the trade operating out of their ports, but according to the 1847 Docks and Piers Clauses Act, all ports must allow the free trade of goods - and this includes livestock.

■ Under European Union free trade rules it is illegal to ban the export of animals to other EU countries, and the government have said that to ban the trade, either directly or by indirect means, would be illegal and would undermine the principle of the free-movement of goods enshrined in the treaty on the functioning of the European Union.

■ The animals currently travel out of Ramsgate after the Port of Dover announced earlier that they would be refurbishing the berth that the Joline sailed from earlier this year. A spokesman said at the time that the work was going to take the berth out of commission for an unspecified amount of time.

■ Ferry companies, such as P&O have been vocal about not wanting to transport livestock, and both Thanet District Council (who own the port of Ramsgate) and the Port of Dover have suffered financially as a consequence of trying to ban the trade.

■ The Dover Harbour Board have tried to ban exports, but has been taken to the High Court, where it was seriously criticised - under EU, the ports must allow the shippers to ply their trade.

■ TDC enforced a temporary ban on exporting livestock, exporters challenged the ban, citing loss of earning, costing the council £80,000 and forcing them to re-open the waterways to them.

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Continued from page 15

stock, was found guilty of causing sheep to be transported in a way likely to cause injury and suffering in February last year.

Lomas was sentenced to six months in prison, suspended for two years, ordered to pay a £5,000 fine and a £15 victim surcharge, and his company was ordered to pay £4,000 and £10,000 costs, after over 40 sheep had to be euthanized during a journey in September 2012.

One of the most active groups opposing the trade is KAALE - Kent Action Against Live Exports. Set up by Yvonne and Ian Birchall, it has coordinated much of the protest so far and closely monitors the trade.

There are two main reasons the group oppose live export – firstly, the journeys can be very long, travelling by road and sea. It can take a convoy up to 74 hours to travel from Ireland to Romania, for example.

The journey from Ramsgate port to France takes between four and a half and eight and a half hours, on the MV Joline, an open deck adapted Russian barge, that both pro and anti exporters have admitted is 'unsuitable'. All the major ferry firms, however, have rejected any bid for them to travel on their vessels.

Secondly, campaigners claim British slaughterhouses are regulated more tightly than those abroad, a claim that Mr Langrish from the NFU denies. "This is absolute rubbish," he says, "unless maybe you're talking about places like Greece and southern Italy.

"Holland and Belgium have more control than we have here, and have stopped halal slaughter without prestunning the animals. There are abattoirs in Holland that are like palaces."

POLICE: Tackle protestors outside Ramsgate

The figures, however, are showing a decline.

"At the peak of the trade [late 1980s], two and a half million sheep were being transported a year from Dover, and three quarters of a millions cows," says Mr Langrish. "Now it's closer to half a million sheep a year."

He claims the issue is Europe won't accept live animals as easily as before due to the spread of TB.

Referring to the campaigners he says: "They won't have any of the little badgers killed, and it is the badgers that are spreading the disease.

"There was also an impact after the BSE situation, which was total nonsense. This means a lot of the market has been filled by the Polish and eastern Europeans, and I don't see the trade ever reaching the peaks it did in its heyday."

Ian Burchill from KAALE says his group's direct action will not cease until it stops completely. He said: "We are making a difference, daily we are making a difference – there's a lot going on. We're fed up of it, and I think all our local MPs are fed up of it, and I think what we must keep on doing the things we're doing, writing letters, pestering them so they get so fed up that they finally say enough is enough.

"We are not always treated fairly by the police, who do tend to favour the exporters because it is trade, and trade must get through."

A spokesman for Kent Police denied any taking of sides. Explaining: "The primary role of Kent Police around the activity at the port is to facilitate lawful export activity and peaceful protest, to prevent and detect crime and disorder and to ensure the safety of the public, the protestors and the police.

"We have continued to engage with protest groups, the ports, and other relevant agencies in our efforts to ensure the facilitation of both the export activity and the right to peacefully protest."

Despite this, the force came under fire in November when police watchdog the IPCC (Independent Police Complaints Commission) upheld a complaint against Kent Police after officers corralled exporters during a protest.

But, barring a complete ban of the trade, it is hard to see arguments ever reaching a happy compromise.

Mr Langrish said: "The protestors are a bunch of nutters, and many would like to see people not kill or eat animals at all. They also have no idea how to create a viable business."

Robert and Jean Bridger from Ramsgate have been protesting the exports for four years.

They said: "There is a real mix of people down here. For us, it is a welfare issue - we just can't understand how a trade that is so inhumane is allowed to go on. The animals are clearly suffering - how can money be made more important that the treatment of living creatures?"

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CHANGE: Town transformed

Tonbridge turns a new political page

Molly Kersey starts our run down of all Kent constituencies

FOR decades, Tonbridge and Malling has been a seat drenched in blue.

Conservative MP Sir John Stanley has remained in place for 41 uninterrupted years. In fact, he's been able to buy his season ticket to London year-in, year-out without having to ponder on election year if he should perhaps switch to a monthly.

It is no mean feat. During his time he has experienced the Winter of Discontent in the 1970s through to the second so-called Summer of Love in 1988. He is the 11th longest serving post-war MP.

Margaret Thatcher had yet to rise to leader and no sooner had he won his seat at Westminster, in February 1974, he found himself back on the campaign trail after a hung Parliament, and no coalition formed, saw the nation recalled to the ballot boxes in the October.

On both occasions, he sat on a comfortable majority. He even beat a young Jack Straw - who would later become Home Secretary under Tony Blair - in the February poll.

Since that first election win, his majority has rarely slipped below 20 per cent. At the 2010 election it was an extremely comfortable 35.4.

But now, at the age of 73, he has decided to step down.

It is hard to imagine Tonbridge being anything other than blue by the morning of May 8.

And the man replacing Sir John is Tom Tugendhat - a relative spring chicken at 41.

He left the British Army in 2013 after a career which saw him serve in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Originally from Sellindge, between Ashford and Hythe, he is no stranger to the county, parachuted in from Tory HQ. He now lives in Edenbridge.

But despite running for an entrenched Conservative seat, he insists victory is no foregone conclusion.

"I don't think there's such a thing as a safe seat," he told KoS.

"It's been a safe seat for John Stanley, but not anybody else.

"I have been working incredibly hard and will continue to do so. I will not be confident until I see the results come in."

The Tonbridge and Malling constituency is classic Conservative heartland.

Embracing the likes of Hadlow, Kings Hill, West Malling, Hever, Penshurst Wrotham and Borough Green, it butts on to the Sevenoaks district - one of the very few areas in Kent where the incumbant MP enjoys an even larger majority than Sir John.

The question is whether the approximately 73.000 registered voters will react any differently to the young pretender.

"There are many things that Sir John and I will do differently," Mr Tungendhat explains, "not least because there's a generational shift. Sir John was selected before I was born and since then he has had a hell of an impressive career in Parliament," he said.

"I think the things that unite John and I very clearly are a very, very strong sense of duty which Sir John has shown for the last 40 years and which I hope I have shown for the last 10 to 15 years through the armed forces."

Certainly there are plenty of key issues for the candidates to discuss on the doorstep.

The flooding which impacted on the borough over the Christmas and New Year of 2013/14 is still fresh in the memory - and the defences to protect against it happening again remain something of a sore point.

In addition, there is poor mobile phone coverage in key areas. Blend in national issues such as NHS privatisation issues, affordable housing and cliamte change, there's much to sway the uncertain voter.

And that's before the commuter belt town gets onto the thorny issue of the trains.

Adds Mr Tungendhat: "A lot of people in the area commute.

"It affects the very lives of people, it affects how quickly they can get home and see their families."

Yet rising ticket prices and the problems at London Bridge have made it a hot topic.

Claire Leigh will be standing in the constituency for Labour, a distant third in the 2010 election. She said: "There's been a 30.5 per cent rise over recent years - and this on top of already very, very high train prices.

"This is people who are commuting up to jobs in London who are suddenly finding themselves having to pay upwards of £1,000 more for a season ticket."

Green parliamentary candidate Howard Porter agrees.

"The railway privatisation has been a complete disaster, it's a mess. The amount people now have got to spend on season tickets if they are commuting from our area is phenomenal," he said.

Closer to home has been the desire to see the town centre transformed.

A £70m regeneration scheme that would have seen a major facelift was scrapped after Sainsbury's withdrew from the plan.

It would have been part of a regeneration that provided a leisure centre, restaurants, a petrol station and a multi-screen cinema alongside a flagship supermarket store.

It was a victim of the change in strategy of the big supermarkets - away from enormous new stores.

A more modest proposal has, instead, taken its place.

"Some £2.6m has been set aside for the regeneration of the town centre," says Labour's Claire Leigh, "but it can't disguise the severe economic and financial problems that people in Tonbridge are facing.

"We can actually see that through the high streets currently filling up with pound shops, pawn shops and pay day loans companies. Debt charity Step Change said they saw a 17 per cent rise in people coming to them with problems last year."

Arguably the Tory's biggest rival

HOPE: Claire Leigh and Tom Tugendhat

PREVIOUS RESULTS

Past general election results for Tonbridge & Malling:

2010

John Stanley (Con) - 29,723 (58%)
Liz Simpson (Lib Dem) - 11,545 (22%)
Daniel Griffiths (Lab)- 6,476 (13%)
David Waller (Ukip) - 1,911 (4%)
Steve Dawe (Green)- 764 (1%)
Mike Easter (NF) - 505 (1%)
Lisa Rogers (Eng Dem) - 390 (1%)

Majority: 18,178 (35.4%)

2005

John Stanley (Con) - 24,357 (52.9%)
Victoria Hayman (Lab) - 11,005 (23.9%)
John Barstow (Lib Dem) - 8,980 (19.5%)
Dave Waller (Ukip) - 1,721 (3.7%)

Majority: 13,352 (29 %)

OFF: Sir John Stanley

Continued on Page 20

Continued from page 19

will by Ukip should the party's rise continue.

Robert Izzard, Ukip's candidate, thinks the town centre money could be better spent elsewhere.

"Given such serious matters, it is strange that the authorities can find the £2.6m to be spent on narrowing Tonbridge High Street plus road closures, for what seems minimal gain and benefit, when the money could be used for flood defences. Remember, a refurbished high street can also flood, what then?"

The Lib Dems, second last time around, are committed to the town plans, however.

Candidate Mary Varrall explained: "It's such a different town centre to somewhere like Sevenoaks or even Tunbridge Wells.

"I think if you can get people to be proud of their public space then it always brings improvements.

"People want to be there and businesses want to be there. I am optimistic that will go forward and that will make a huge difference."

Labour's Claire Leigh adds: "What I want to say to people in Tonbridge and Malling is you do have a choice and you can make a difference; you can change your mind.

"I think this is a really interesting year for Tonbridge and Malling, obviously it's a challenging seat for us and we are not under any illusions about that, but John Stanley is stepping down and he had a personal vote attached to him."

Ukip candidate Robert Izzard added: "We sense that many people are seriously disillusioned with the established main parties and that everything is now up-for-grabs.

"When a party thinks a constituency is a safe seat for them, they can be tempted to take it for granted and concentrate their efforts on marginal seats elsewhere.

"That is not the way for Tonbridge and Malling to get the best from the Conservatives or any party in that position."

KOS PREDICTS...

There is more chance of Nigel Farage becoming prime minister on May 8 than there is of the Conservatives not holding on to Tonbridge. Even in the great swing to Labour in 1997 under Tony Blair, the Tory majority was a solid 20 per cent.

So if you want to gamble and be guaranteed a return, then Tom Tungendhat is one of the safest bets you'll be able to make in this general election.

Ashford: The battle for second place

By Molly Kersey
molly.kersey@archant.co.uk

FOR many years Ashford has heralded itself as the 'best placed in Kent' - a former market town perched on key transport routes (the M20 and converging rail lines).

For even more years, since 1931 in fact, it has been a safe Conservative seat.

Current incumbent is former Coalition minister Damian Green who took over the seat in 1997 from Sir Keith Speed. The thought of him dropping the baton in May seems too tall a tale to comprehend.

LIBS: Debbie Enever

CANDIDATES

Full list of confirmed candidates:

Damian Green (Con)
Brendan Chilton (Lab)
Debbie Enever (Lib Dem)
Mandy Rossi (Green)
Gerald O'Brien (Ukip)

"I am always confident," says the former immigration minister and former journalist, "but never complacent. We are fighting the election hard already, we are talking to people and the response is good."

So what are the key issues affecting the town, and how will this influence who people vote for?

Mr Green said: "I think the key things are transport, clearly it's always a big issue in Ashford, and also the prospect of a new motorway junction 10a."

It is seen as a key link for the town's often controversial expansion plans - most notably the creation of a mini-town at Chimington Green, currently a tiny rural hamlet.

He said that the housing development on Chilmington Green was also an issue.

Ukip candidate Gerald O'Brien explained: "Some 8,000 people signed a petition saying they didn't want it and they just got ignored.

"I think we have got to start listening to local people. People who live in Ashford ought to have some sort of say about what happens.

"It's down to what the people of Ashford decide at the ballot box."

Mr Green adds: "The balance between business development and preserving the countryside is a big issue and the third is the town centre. We need to improve it. I think people will vote on a mixture of national and local issues."

The town centre is something that is brought up by many of the candidates.

Like many in Kent, it has suffered in recent years.

Green parliamentary candidate Mandy Rossi explained: "I talk about this as a local issue but it's the same across the country.

"There are so many chains moving in we don't facilitate easy use for independent businesses. For example I would really like to see at least one area of the town centre that has a special local business tax, so they don't have to pay the massive taxes or busi-

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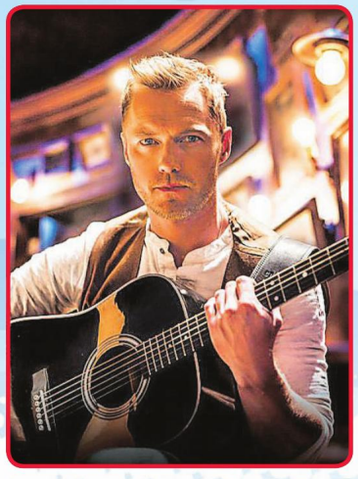

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KOS PREDICTS...

The only question for Ashford is not who is going to win - Damian Green is almost assured his route back to Westminster - but more who comes second. Traditionally the Lib Dems and Labour battle it out for second, but the impact of Ukip will be interesting. Not only is it possible it could erode the Tory majority, but it will be fascinating to see its impact on the other major parties.

ness rates, so it actually engages people.

"I know we have been doing these kind of pop-ups but the problem is that people are there for a couple of weeks and then they are back to square one.

"It's not long enough to establish yourself and get that following for when you start up on your own."

Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate Debbie Enever agrees it is a key concern on the campaign trail.

She explains: "From what I hear, I think that town planning and infrastructure are key issues for the people of Ashford.

"It's great to have out of town shops but this should not be at the expense of the high street."

Adds Labour's Brendan Chilton: "I think there are a number of key issues we have really got to look at. The first is simply the cost of living in Ashford.

"We have got an enormous private rented sector, with rent going completely out of control.

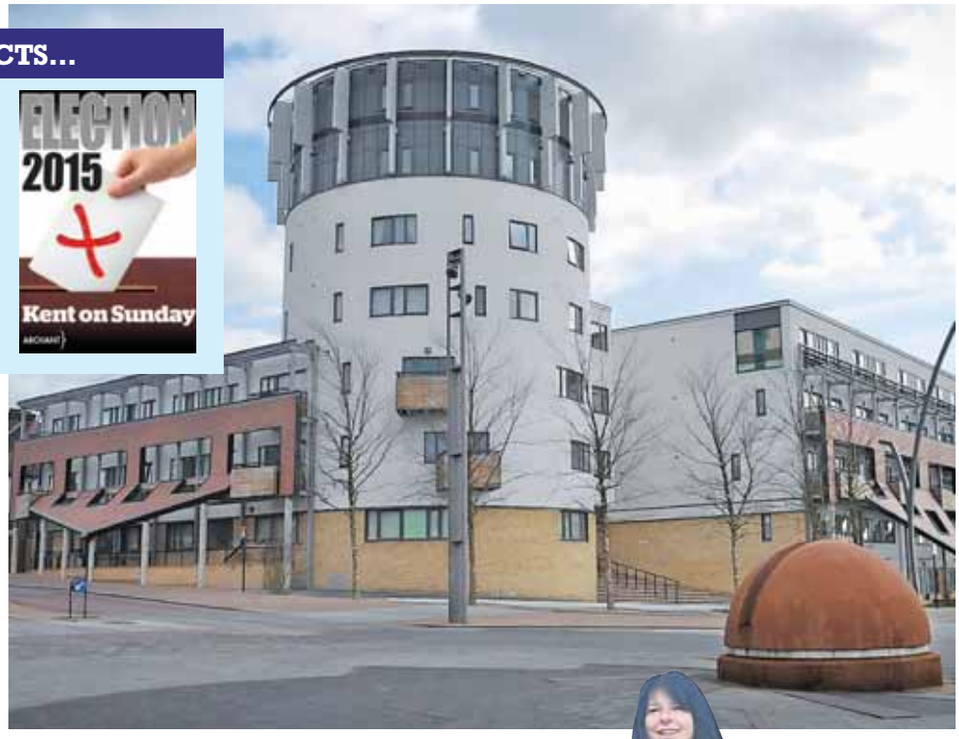
"Ashford is a very large commuter town and I think every year the continuous rise in rail prices is just absurd.

"On top of that you have your rent or your mortgage, you have got to pay that every year. It's just unaffordable for people."

Ukip parliamentary candidate Gerald O'Brien says that there are national issues which are trickling down and having an impact locally.

"The William Harvey Hospital is in special measures and there are various things that are being done like recruiting nurses from Spain and Portugal, which is plugging a gap that needs to be plugged.

"While we can resolve the nursing shortages short term what we actually need is something long term. We need to knuckle down to it and train young nurses here."



FIGHT: Mandy Rossi is hoping the Greens can make a dent on Green's sizeable majority

PREVIOUS RESULTS

Past general election results for Tonbridge & Malling:

2010

Damian Green (Con) - 29,878 (54.1%)
Chris Took (Lib Dem) - 12,581 (22.8%)
Chris Clark (Lab) - 9,204 (16.7%)
Jeffrey Elenor (Ukip)- 2,508 (4.5%)
Steven Campkin (Green) - 1,014 (1.8%)

Majority: 17,297 (31.3%)

2005

Damian Green (Con)- 26,651 (51.6%)
Valerie Whitaker (Lab) - 13,353 (25.8%)
Chris Took (Lib Dem) - 8,308 (16.1%)
Richard Boden (Green) - 1,753 (3.4%)
Bernard Stroud (Ukip) - 1,620 (3.1%)

Majority: 13,298 (25.7%)

CONTROL: MP Damian Green

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Spa town's long term rejuvenation revealed

Plans to create a 'vibrant' town centre in Tunbridge Wells have been unveiled, but concerns over timescales remain

By Chris Murphy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

FOR all its beauty and architectural splendour, Tunbridge Wells town centre has always been a rather splintered affair.

From the chain stores on the pedestrian heart of the town and the modern Royal Victoria Place complex, to the slope down the hill of Mount Pleasant Road to the old High Street and eventually the Pantiles, its scale and size is both an asset and its Achilles' heel.

But now a new plan to 'join the dots' has been unveiled by the council in a bid to ensure the town's appeal to visitors and the threat of booming out of town complexes around it don't allow its historic retail hub to erode yet further.

Called the Urban Design Framework, it is the result of extensive consultation within the Conservative-run council cabinet.

It proposes to "provide guidance on improving the public realm and spaces; enhancing movement and accessibility; and improving the quality of development".

It may sound modest, but then evolution rather than revolution is most definitely the way forward in a town with a fiercely protective community.

For anyone who remembers the fiasco of plans to sell off the Town Hall, the implications of taking giant steps can come at a very high price.

That saw the then council leader's reputation take such a blow it would ultimately see him overthrown by his own party. It was, in addition, a masterclass in how not to communicate effectively with your residents.

One major aspect is the creation of a town square outside the existing Town Hall building in Civic Way and Mount Pleasant with grand steps linking roads of two levels.

In addition, there will be pedestrian paving on to Monson Road.

Its completion could see things like festivals, fairs, markets and a host of other open air events.

There's talk too of a plaza in front of the Great Hall, opposite the mainline railway station.

The council says this new plan aims to improve "the attractiveness of Tunbridge Wells town centre and supporting improvements to our road network. Identifying opportunities to protect and enhance the environment and to promote vitality through development opportunities".

In a nutshell, that means improve linkages between different areas of the town centre and to improve the look and feel of the streets and public areas with a view to 'promoting wellbeing and a sense of peace'.

It will also promote the town centre as an attractive and thriving place for retail and leisure, including the night-time economy, and promote the regeneration of vacant, derelict and run-down sites.

Like most other towns in the county, it has suffered in recent years.

The authority is also keen to promote and improve access to the town's cultural, tourism and amenity attractions.

But a major slice of the intricate blueprint is to reduce traffic congestion in the town centre and beyond and to encourage alternative modes of transport, like using buses, bikes or walking.

Certainly anyone who ever finds themselves having to negotiate the town centre by car will find the thought of 'wellbeing and a sense of peace' a rather foreign concept.

Opposition leader David Neve, of the Liberal Democrats, said: "I support this framework, but there is no point in making the centre attractive if the roads are not able to cope with the traffic. A park and ride service has been talked about for 15 years now, but nothing has happened. That would take a lot of traffic off the roads coming in and out of the town, and could be paid for by putting up parking prices."

Once all the components are merged, it is hoped a vibrant new easy-access spine to the town will be created, encouraging visitors to move around all sections, rather than stay in one. Public consultation should begin as early as next month.

Officials are now examining the many funding possibilities available, such as so-called Section 106 agreements. These are built into contracts with developers where, in exchange for work they carry out for commercial gain, they will contribute to the

PLANS: Proposals are in addition to those for the likes of Fiveways shown here

CHALLENGE: The Town Hall (left) has town centre traffic as a key consideration

town infrastructure.

A council spokesman explained: "The aim of this framework is to set out the attributes of the town and to provide a wider long term perspective of where the town wants to be.

"We are confident this framework will give all parties guidance to work towards a town that is attractive, vibrant and viable."

Alastair Tod is chairman of the Tunbridge Wells Town Forum. Created in 2005 as a partnership between resident representatives and ward councillors to address local issues, he gives it a cautious thumbs up.

He said: "The framework is very good and very welcome.

"It takes a tremendously long view because the council has very little money to invest in this kind of thing.

"So, basically, they have set out a programme for work throughout the centre of town, and now have to wait for developers to come forward with schemes and then attach bits of the council's programme to the development of nearby sites.

"But basically it's waiting for developers."

CINEMA SITE...DEMOLISHED BUT STILL THORN IN THE SIDE

THE saga of the Tunbridge Wells cinema site took a giant stride forward last year...but a resolve appears a long way off.

Since 2000, the former ABC picture house opposite the Town Hall has stood derelict as plans to redevelop the site came and went.

But after enormous public pressure, the familiar facade - dubbed the town's biggest 'grot spot' - has now been razed to the ground. Yet there are no immediate apparent plans to do anything with the site, amid prolonged discussions with potential new buyers - thought to include a hotel or supermarket chain.

The site remains surrounded by hoardings.

Pressure has grown on the council to issue a Compulsory Purchase Order - exercising a power it has to buy certain sites for the good of the community. However, the use of public money would come at a high risk for a commercial site. The key danger being the authority spends tens of millions to acquire the site only to find itself unable to sell it too.

The saga, as all good movie franchises say, continues.

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LIGHTS: Spotted above Chatham in January 2012

Close encounters: Top 10 reports of UFOs in our skies

Tales from out of this world...**Maria Chiorando** takes a look at some of the claims of 'alien' craft spotted above county

IN THE vast universe which stretches into the void, it seems rather unlikely that we are the one and only form of intelligent life.

For many, however, proof of the existance of an extra-terrestrial is not in question. Because not only do they believe they exist...but that they've frequently made visits to Earth.

And while the US seems to claim the really dramatic incidents, this corner of England has, should you believe it, seen more than its fair share of visitors too (no doubt keen to see the Garden of England and enjoy a pint of Shepherd Neame before the long flight back to wherever it is they come from).

So in the name of science, we thought it worthy of bringing together ten of the most memorable sightings of unidentified flying objects in recent months...or, to you and me, UFOs.

Where? **CHATHAM**
When? **January 6, 2012**

Two mysterious floating objects were captured on film(left) by an unsuspecting snapper as they drifted over Chatham. The strange orbs, or very similar ones, were later sighted in Essex.

The first image was captured by Ernestas Griksas, 21, who was taking a picture of a cherry-picker outside his home in Chatham at around 1pm. He didn't notice the bizarre apparition until afterwards, when looking at the pictures.

Speaking at the time, Mr Griksas said: "There are two white discs I can't explain. I'm nowhere near a flightpath. One is slightly fainter as if it is further away or going at a different speed."

Nick Pope used to run the British Government's UFO Project and is now recognised as one of the world's leading experts on the subject.

He told our website, kentnews.co.uk, at the time: "Assuming the photos are genuine, they're very interesting, although with one photo, nothing unusual was seen at the time, which raises the possibility that this was caused by a fault with the camera.

"We could be dealing with some sort of atmospheric plasma phenomenon, or some other rare meteorological effect. Other possibilities include a secret prototype aircraft or drone, though I wouldn't expect to see them in these sorts of locations.

"It's difficult to say."

Where? **ASHFORD**
When? **October 10, 2013**

An eyewitness identifying himself solely as Nigel gave a detailed statement on a UFO Facebook page about his sighting in Tenterden: "We were sitting in the garden, sky was perfectly blue without cloud. I heard a jet flying over, looked up and noticed an Easyjet. However, approximately 2-3,000ft directly above the jet, there was a completely stationery bright silver object that was metallic in appearance, cylinder shape and other features.

"Aproximately every 15 seconds it would appear to pulse briefly, giving the appearance of vanishing, it would then re-appear in exactly the same position, slightly black briefly before regaining the silver tube appearance.

"It was high and I remember thinking surely the jet would have identified another object with radar.

"We watched it for around six minutes when it suddenly completely vanished, no sound and lights of any form.

"I know my planes extremely well, but this for me was stunning sighting on the off chance of looking up and clear skies. It was too high to try and record with my mobile phone. Location wise, it was approximately above Ashford south."

Where? **TENTERDEN**
When? **February 8, 2013**

An unidentified flying object was spotted in the skies over Ashford during 'daylight hours' according to an eye witness who was driving along the A2070.

The UK UFO sightings website received a witness statement from Martin Davey who says he was a passenger in a car when he spotted what he described as 'the strangest object ever'.

In his post on the website he said he saw the UFO heading towards Tenterden just after 1pm, saying: "I saw the strangest object ever very low to the ground floating or gliding away from the A2070 towards Tenterden direction.

"It was huge and how something that size flies is a mystery. It looked like an upside-down sharp-edged metal flower."

"It was like a dark tin foil colour and smooth with a line of dots along the base of the bottom of the top bud.

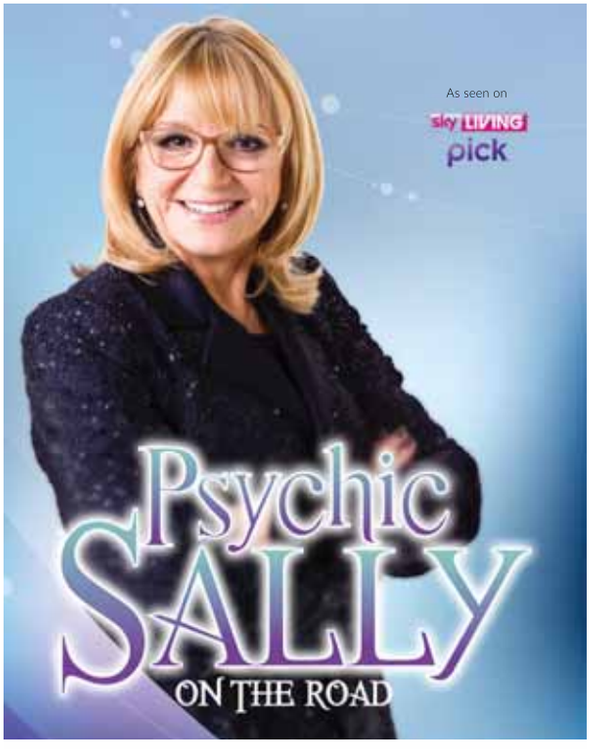
"I watched for maybe a minute in utter disbelief at what I was looking at as it was nothing like I've seen before."

Mr Davey described how the unidentified object went out of view as he passed some bushes and then disappeared.

Where? **DARTFORD**
When? **Summer, 1998**

Irene Brennan gave an account of a bizarre light she saw drifting in the sky around Dartford. "I was driving down to Maidstone from Suffolk in the evening and somewhere on the road after the Dartford tunnel I noticed a bright light in the sky that seemed to

VISITORS: Have intergalatic expolorers paid us a visit?



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UFO FACTS

The term 'UFO' was not coined until 1953, by the United States Air Force, as a catch-all phrase for all for objects in airspace that could not immediately be identified.

According to the authority, a UFO is "any airborne object which by performance, aerodynamic characteristics, or unusual features, does not conform to any presently known aircraft or missile type, or which cannot be positively identified as a familiar object". Before this, UFOs were often described as 'flying saucers' or 'flying 'discs'.

Studies have concluded that most UFO observations are misidentified conventional objects or natural phenomena—most commonly aircraft, balloons, types of clouds, or astronomical objects such as meteors or bright planets - not to mention the small percentage being hoaxes.

Between five and 20 per cent of reported sightings are not explained, and therefore can be classified as unidentified in the strictest sense. Despite various studies concluding that these flying objects don't pose any threats to national security, or merit further scientific study, interest remains strong.

We are, it seems, constantly fascinated by what might be out there...

be staying in the same place all the time," she said.

"It stayed in the same position for quite a long while as I drove down the motorway and I approached it and literally drove underneath whatever it was.

"It was triangular shaped with lights at each corner and as I looked up I could see that the underside of the object was divided into sections.

"I wondered if it could have been a Harrier or the "invisible" Stealth bomber or something but I didn't see any wheels hanging down, just the lights at the corner of the triangle."

Where? **TONBRIDGE**
When? **June 5, 2008**
LOCATION: **Tonbridge**

Every year, the Ministry of Defence receives details of UFO sightings. And in documents released in 2009, it revealed defence officials had examined a report of a UFO over Tonbridge the previous June.

The Tonbridge sighting took place on June 5 at approximately 12.55am, with an unidentified eyewitness saying that: "An object was flying around in circles at aeroplane level and sounded like an industrial train. There was a strange flashing on the object."

That was not the end of the incident - just over three weeks later on June 28, a further sighting was reported, with the location specified only as Kent.

Where? **DOVER**
When? **2008**

Reports were received of some half a dozen glowing lights - described as 'an orange fire' colour. They were silent and, so it is claimed, moved across the sky at the speed of a helicopter. A chinese lantern or five, perhaps?

Where? **RAINHAM**
When? **2008**

A UFO that looked like a yellowy light. The object was quite near and fairly low down in the sky..
There was no sound. Surely it couldn't be the sun going behind a cloud? Can't be.

Where? **FAVERSHAM**
When? **2013**

An orange ball of light seen silently flying overhead before changing direction and disappearing. It made no noise. The light was flickering, but not like a flame.

Where? **WHITSTABLE**
When? **2014**

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When? **2008**

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UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS

‘Fair maid’ who married a prince and made a king

Molly Kersey takes a look at the story behind the remarkable Joan of Kent

HISTORY: The Black Prince at Canterbury Cathedral and author of the new book, Penny Lawne (inset)

A SECRET marriage, forced bigamy and an impressive rise to power...Joan of Kent was also once described by the medieval French writer Jean Froissart as “the most beautiful woman in all the realm of England”.

But for many today, the name will mean very little.

Yet her face can be found carved into the stone of Canterbury Cathedral - and her former husband’s tomb there remains one of its most popular attractions.

So just who was Joan of Kent - or, as the history books frequently refer to her, the Fair Maid of Kent?

Born in 1328, her father was Edmund of Woodstock, the first Earl of Kent and the son of King Edward I and half-brother to Edward II.

Her fame springs from her marriage, in 1361 to Edward, the Black Prince, and became the very first Princess of Wales.

She was the mother of Richard II, who succeeded to the throne, and the only woman to ever be the Princess of Aquitaine, a part of France at that stage under English rule.

Now an author from Tunbridge Wells has written a book about her remarkable life.

Penny Lawne first became interested in Joan of Kent as a teenager.

She read a book in which she was mentioned and the fascination has remained ever since.

After retiring, she began researching and exploring the woman who led something of an incredible life.

“Years later I wanted to know a little bit more about her because she’s mentioned in the history books as the Princess of Wales, but I couldn’t find out much about her,” Ms Lawne explained.

“When I had the opportunity to do research I thought this would be a good person to do research on.”

Ms Lawne gained her doctorate in history in 2007.

And she enjoyed delving into the background of Joan of Kent.

“She had a reputation for being very beautiful,” she explains. “And put family first. She was also an incredibly loyal woman.”

Her father had been executed when she was just two years old - killed for being part of an apparent rebellion against his brother.

But her adult life would be no less dramatic, despite mixing in such refined circles.

“What is very interesting,” says Ms Lawne, “and certainly a little unusual, is that she wasn’t an expected bride for the Prince of Wales.

“She had a rather difficult marital history. She had already been married twice, she had already had four children, and she wasn’t a foreign princess.

“She was 32 when she married him, which at the time was certainly not young.”

Joan of Kent had previously been married to Thomas Holland - who she wed at the age of 12 - and a year later, a forced marriage to William Montacute, the Earl of Salisbury.

“I think that’s a real love story there and a very understated one,” said Ms Lawne of the marriage to Thomas Holland.

“She went abroad with the King and Queen and it was while she was there she met this household knight. He swept her off her feet and they married in secret.”

However, when her husband went overseas to serve in the military, her family decided that Joan should marry William Montacute, regardless of the fact that she was already married.

“She was taken back to England and her mother and her uncle arranged a marriage for her,” Ms Lawne explained.

“They either didn’t believe her or believed they could pay him off.

“It was a much more socially suitable marriage, but she wouldn’t agree to it. She wouldn’t give up on the household knight.”

Joan was imprisoned for some eight years by the Montacute family when they discovered her first marriage and her wish to return to the husband that she truly loved.

After Thomas Holland returned to England and fought for his wife’s return, the pope decided to annul Joan’s marriage to William Montacute.

They enjoyed 11 happy years together, and had four children, before Thomas died.

She remained loyal to him until the end, and when she died she chose to be buried with him rather than the Black Prince - whom she wed after Thomas’ death.

It was when she was widowed that she was wooed by Edward, the Black Prince - eldest son of King Edward III.

He was her younger cousin.

They were married by the Archbishop of Canterbury in a public ceremony in 1361.

Ms Lawne said: “The position of women was very different then to how we think of women today.

“What I would say is she was a woman who ended up being in a very powerful and influential position but her power and her influence wasn’t apparent.

“Did she choose not to exercise it and if not, why not? Or did she not have the opportunity to exercise it.

“She put her family first, in particular her son Richard and she managed her reputation. I think she was very much a woman of her time.”

The Black Prince died aged 45 which meant his son became heir to the throne. When Edward III died a year later, Richard was crowned.

The questionable legality of her marriage to the Black Prince could have threatened her son Richard II’s succession to the throne.

But by being deliberately self-effacing, she created and managed her reputation and used her skills to protect and support her son.

After her husband died, Richard was crowned at the age of just 10 years old. Suddenly she was mother of the most influential figure in the kingdom.

Ms Lawne added: “Her reputation was something that I believe she managed very carefully. There was always a question mark over the validity of her marriage to the Prince of Wales.

“William Montacute was still alive. The Pope declared that marriage to be null and void but there was always the possibility that the next Pope could say ‘no I don’t agree with that’.

“The Pope tended to play politics at the time so there was always that possibility.

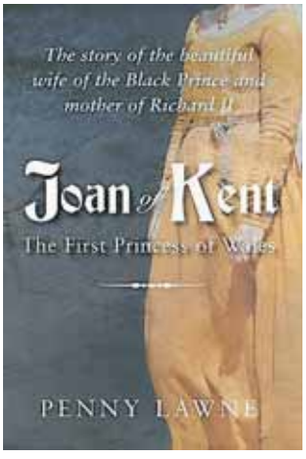
“I think she was very careful to manage it and didn’t do anything to allow people to say she wasn’t behaving as she should.

“She was basically first lady at court after Queen Phillipa and for the rest of her life until Richard II married.”

Joan died, aged 56, in Berkshire. She was was buried beside her first husband in Lincolnshire.

Her third husband, the Black Prince, was buried in Canterbury Cathedral. He had expected her laid to rest alongside him and built a chantry in the crypt for her. Her face appears above where she would have been buried in the cathedral.

HEIR: Joan was the mother of Richard II and carried considerable influence



REMARKABLE: Joan’s life in full

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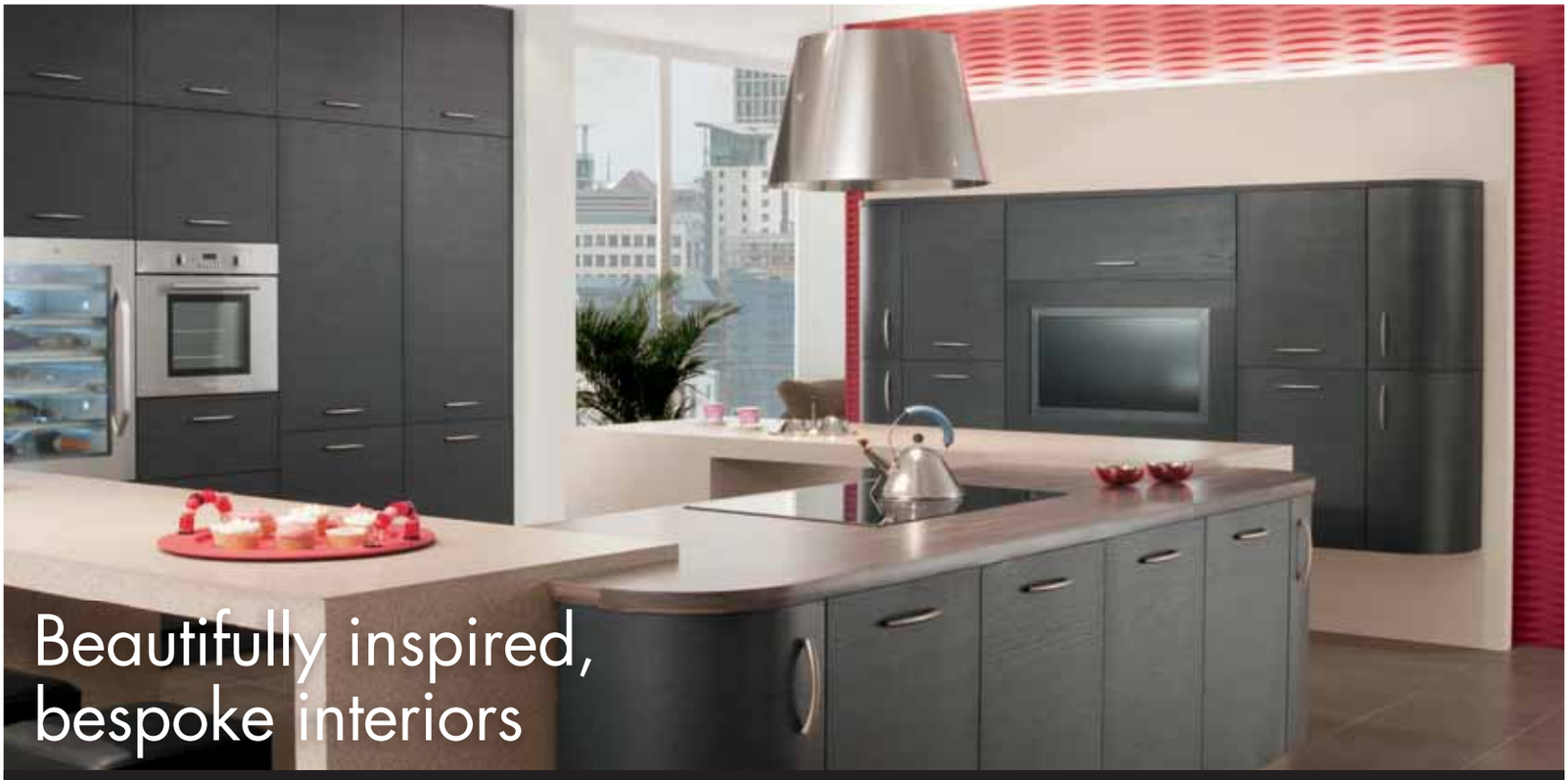

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Unique items in £25,000 auction

By Chris Murphy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

A STUNNING collection of antique musical items and amusement machines went under the auctioneer's hammer last week, raising nearly £25,000.

All came from a private collector in east Kent who gathered together the items over more than two decades.

But last week he saw the complete collection sold in Canterbury.

Sound engineer Raymond Stacey is naturally passionate about sound, and decided some 20 years ago to put together a major collection of some of the finest machines designed to create a variety of sounds.

One major piece was an early 20th century American Aeolian "Orchestrelle" Model XY player organ with 58 key keyboard and 22 stops.

It is all built into a huge panelled mahogany case with moulded cornice and four moulded columns. It even comes with 200 rolls of music so the machine can play on its own. It sold for £2,000 at the sale on Wednesday afternoon.

Mr Stacey, who bought it in 2004, said: "When new, this cost the same as a house in London."

It was originally a wedding present for a colonel and his new wife and underwent a full restoration in 1990.

Mr Stacey said: "I have always loved music, so anything that makes a noise, I've got it."

He said: "My collection included pinball machines that you would have seen in transport cafes back in the day, as well as arcades, like the one at Dreamland in Margate.

"One of my favourite machines is a one-armed bandit that even has a change machine built in, so you didn't have to stop playing."

He added: "A penny-fall machine that was in the sale even has some shiny 1967 pennies inside that have never been in circulation."

So why build such a collection?

He said: "Partly because I am mad, and as a child, my parents always had cafes with these machines in there. I was always fascinated by them, and I guess that is what started my journey for me.

"I am in to audio, so the mechanical music is tied in with that. It really was a bit of an obsession for me. I now realise that you can't keep collecting. You start to enjoy them less because there is too much."

After the sale at the Canterbury Auction Galleries, he told us: "I am pretty happy with the way the sale went.

"We sold everything apart from 13 items from the 96 lots entered. It has been hard work putting this all together and I am quite happy it is now all over.

"I needed the space at home, but I am a little sad that the collection has gone."

Other highlights were a late 19th century concert roller organ which sold for £400; a 1960s Bell-O-Matic one armed bandit which went for £760, above its £600 estimate; a 1950s Parker's Automatics penny lot Carousel Alwin with a funfair back panel that was snapped up for £820, again above its guide price; and an early 20th century Edison phonograph called Red Gem that sold for £1,200, way above its guide of £700.

In fact, all 11 Edison machines sold, and did well.

Not everything sold. A 19th century Mutoscope estimates at £3,500 didn't go, nor did an £800 1950s Turk Champ pinball machine.

VINTAGE: Games like this old-fashioned pinball machine were also on offer

VALUABLE: This organ was sold for £2,000

UNUSUAL: An Edison phonograph machine

GAMBLING: This fruit machine is customised with a built-in change machine

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Little ships prepare to re-enact the remarkable Dunkirk rescue

Operation Dynamo saw thousands of British troops saved from the beaches during the Second World War. As its 75th anniversary approaches, **Molly Kersey** takes a look at a very special way to mark it...

ON MAY 26, 1940, one of the most remarkable military feats got under way. But this was no brave assault or triumphant claiming of a city. This was retreat.

Yet the remarkable rescue effort that underpinned Operation Dynamo has remained a key moment during the Second World War.

After all, mention the bravery of Dunkirk, and the emotional response is immediate.

With British forces cut off and surrounded, the most audacious rescue bid was launched - with ships big and small sent from England across the Channel to pick up British soldiers and bring them back.

And this year, to mark the county's role in saving the lives of thousands of troops, there will be a serious of special events taking place to remember its 75th anniversary.

The centre piece of which will see dozens of little ships leaving Ramsgate Royal Harbour in the morning of May 21 and setting sail to Dunkirk. They will leave, it is hoped, to a special gun salute from the Royal Navy and a fly-past by war-time aircraft.

Events director Angie Sutton said: "At the moment there's 60 to 62 coming so there's lots of them. It should be a real sight.

"The RNLI will escort them across to Dunkirk. They will be escorted across there and will stay in Dunkirk over the weekend."

Major General Charles Ramsay, the son of Admiral Sir Betram Ramsay who masterminded the operartion in 1940 will join the hundreds expected to cheer on the small ships, and other local dignitaries expected to attend.

Elsewhere in the town, an Operation Dynamo museum will be opened in the Ramsgate tunnels- which provided refuge for people when the town became a target for bombers.

Back in 1940, every available craft in Kent, big or small, was called into action and they gathered in Sheerness dockyard before making the heroic and hazardous journey across the waters.

It was thanks to their valiant efforts, with the community rallying together in a time of adversity, that some 330,000 troops were rescued.

Mary Lincoln lived in Ramsgate at the time of the Dunkirk evacuation and submitted her memories to the group behind the project to remember the event.

She told them: "We saw various reports in the papers of what was happening over in France and Belgium, but nothing prepared us for the news that the Allies suddenly surrendered to the Germans, leaving the British Army stranded and having to retreat to the coast.

"They all ended up on the beach at Dunkirk, the only port not in German hands.

RESCUE: Troops wait rescue on the beaches of Dunkirk in 1940

"They crowded onto that beach, completely unprotected against incessant bombing and machine gunning.

"When the papers told of their plight, anyone who had an available boat came to their aid. Some hundreds of every kind of boat came from all parts of Britain to the south coast to attempt to bring them home.

"I was working as a waitress at the Granville Hotel in Ramsgate on that day.

"We were asked to volunteer to go to Ramsgate Station in our off duty hours to help the WVS welcome them with tea and something to eat. But nothing prepared us for the tragic condition those soldiers were in.

"The large pleasure building, Merrie England, took all the very badly wounded as it acted as a first aid post.

"The rest were taken by bus to Ramsgate Station, with whatever clothing and blankets the residents of Ramsgate had gathered and brought to the harbour. But the thing that has lived with me, to this day, was their eyes.

"They had very obviously witnessed sights and sounds that no young lad could have been prepared for, and although some of them tried to show pleasure at being back in England, their tragic faces told the story.

"This was the first time I had come face to face with raw tragedy, as I was only 19 at the time, but I have never, ever forgotten it."

The Medway Queen was one of these 'little ships' called into action.

The paddle driven steamship is the only mobile estuary paddle steamer left in the UK and in recent years has been undergoing a renovation project.

HEROIC: Medway Queen was one of the vessels to head across the Channel in 1940

Brian Goodhew, of the Medway Queen Preservation Society, said: "Our troops were stranded on the Dunkirk beaches. The Medway Queen went out there seven times in nine days and brought back thousands of troops. It lasted nine days and after that Dunkirk fell.

"A lot of the people involved will now be well into their 90s, there are some magic stories behind it and they make good reading. The Medway Queen is now at Gillingham Pier. Slowly, slowly, we are fitting it out."

And Mr Goodhew believes that the Medway Queen will always hold a special place in the hearts of many people in the community.

The Medway Queen, thanks to a generous donation from the Gosling Foundation, will be able to attend the event, although it will not make the crossing.

"She's huge and she is so impressive," said Ms Sutton.

"They have been rennovating her for about four years now and they have managed to get enough money to tow her to Ramsgate."

Mr Goodhew added: "We are encouraged by the fact that people in Ramsgate have invited us, we are all looking forward to it. We will be there for about a week."

Other vessels due to take part in the special re-enactment include the Firefly - a tiny 26ft boat which made the perilous journey and saved lives - and the Trimilia, previously Prudential, an RNLI lifeboat.

"She's coming back, said Ms Sutton. "She was built in 1925.

"In total she rescued 330 people in addition to those at Dunkirk, so over 3,000 in her life."

For details of the events and other boats attending, see the website www.operationdynamo75th.co.uk.

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ICONIC: Belinda Lang will star in the musical

Pulitzer-winning musical to play in Kent during UK tour

The story with 'many layers and facets' comes to Dartford's Orchard Theatre

PULITZER-PRIZE winning musical Oklahoma! will be making a stop at the Orchard Theatre, Dartford, during its tour of the UK.

Directed by Rachel Kavanaugh and with new choreography from Drew McOnie, the musical is set in the Oklahoma territory in the early 1900s.

It tells the story of two sets of star-crossed lovers.

Cowboy Curly is in love with Laurey, Aunt Eller's niece, but he has a rival in the form of the mysterious and dangerous hired hand Jud Fry.

Meanwhile, Ado Annie is torn between cowboy Will and and peddler Ali Akim.

The stories are told with the help of some of the best-loved songs in musical theatre history including Oh, What A Beautiful Morning, The Surrey With The Fringe on Top, People Will Say We're In Love, Kansas City and the title song.

With music by Richard Rodgers and book and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, Oklahoma! is based on the Lynn Riggs play Green Grow The Lilacs and was the first musical written by the duo.

It was originally produced on Broadway in 1943 and the Oscar-winning film was released in 1955.

The production stars Belinda Lang, best known for her role as Bill Porter in the long running sitcom 2point4 children, as Aunt Eller.

Gary Wilmot, best known as the host of So You Want To Be Top and Showstoppers, plays Ali Hakim.

Speaking about what drew her towards the iconic musical, director Rachel Kavanaugh explained: "It's a show I grew up with and have always loved.

"But it is also a ground breaking musical in which the storytelling takes place in song, scene and dance.

"When the show was first produced this was completely new.

"Like any great story Oklahoma! has complex characters with recognisable dilemmas, needs and challenges to face.

"It's also set at a moment of change like many great stories and pieces of theatre.

"As the story has many layers and facets, the book of the musical is really meaty for the actors."

"This is not always the case with musicals written before this one."

Choreographer Drew Mconie is excited for the challenge ahead.

He said: "Oklahoma is crafted so fluidly with all the disciplines merging beautifully.

"It also has at its heart a brilliant story that still packs a punch today.

"There are so many brilliant opportunities for exciting narrative dance sequences because the very people that inhabit this world are physically strong and charismatic.

"The fact that the show has an iconic dream ballet only pushes me to serve the piece to a greater level.

"Rarely in modern musicals does dance get given the responsibility to further the story in such a touching and exciting way and I'm going to love every moment of it."

The show will be running at The Orchard Theatre from June 9 to 13.

The tour will be presented through special arrangement with R&H Theatricals Europe.

For more information or to book tickets you can visit www.orchardtheatre.co.uk or call the ticket office on 01322 220000.

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It's game on as Geek returns this weekend

By Chris Britcher
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

THOUSANDS of video game fans will this weekend flock to Margate for the annual Gaming Expo East Kent (Geek) show.

Showcasing thousands of games across video game platforms stretching from the earliest consoles back in the 1970s to the most cutting-edge machines such as the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One, organisers say they hope this could be the biggest yet.

Kate Kneale from Geek said: "We want thousands of people coming to Margate to have fun.

"When we launched Geek, Margate used to close in October and re-open at Easter. We deliberately put Geek in February to bring people to play at the seaside in the winter. We want to bring exciting new game makers into the area - inspiring local creativity and giving people a chance to meet their role models.

"But mostly it's about families and friends getting together and having fun.

"It is more than playing games in a hall. We have an incredible combination of creative skills coming together in a game. Art, design, music composition, creative coding, game mechanics, story-telling and so on. We invite people to play then look under the bonnet and think about the skills that go into making good games.

"The mainstream industry support is building slowly. We have always received amazing support and encouragement from both individuals and organisations."

Staged at the Winter Gardens, it started on Friday and concludes today, Sunday.

Alongside discussion panels and exhibitors, the main attraction for many will be the vast hall packed with games including everything from Commodore 64s to Spectrum ZX81s, Ataris, Nintendos and everything in between.

Geek's weekend of activities continues throughout Sunday. For full details and ticket prices, see the website www.geek-play.com. Activities begin at 10am. Tickets cost £14 for adults, £8 for children.

HALL: Plug in and tune out

RETRO: Games past and present

Laugh out loud production

THE Propellor Theatre will return to Folkestone Quarter-house with Pocket Comedy, a distillation of Shake-speare's The Comedy Of Errors, on February 28 at 2.30pm.

Call 01303 760750 to book.

Ayckbourn's absent mates

A PLAY about a well-intentioned tea party that descends into chaos will be at the Theatre Royal Margate on June 30 and July 1.

Absent Friends, by Alan Ayckbourn, explores friendship, marriage and what it means to be happy.

Call the box office on 01843 292795 to book.

Robert Webb leads cast

COMEDIAN Robert Webb, known for his role as Jeremy in Peep Show, will lead the cast of Jeeves And Wooster in Perfect Nonsense at the Marlowe Theatre from March 17 to 21.

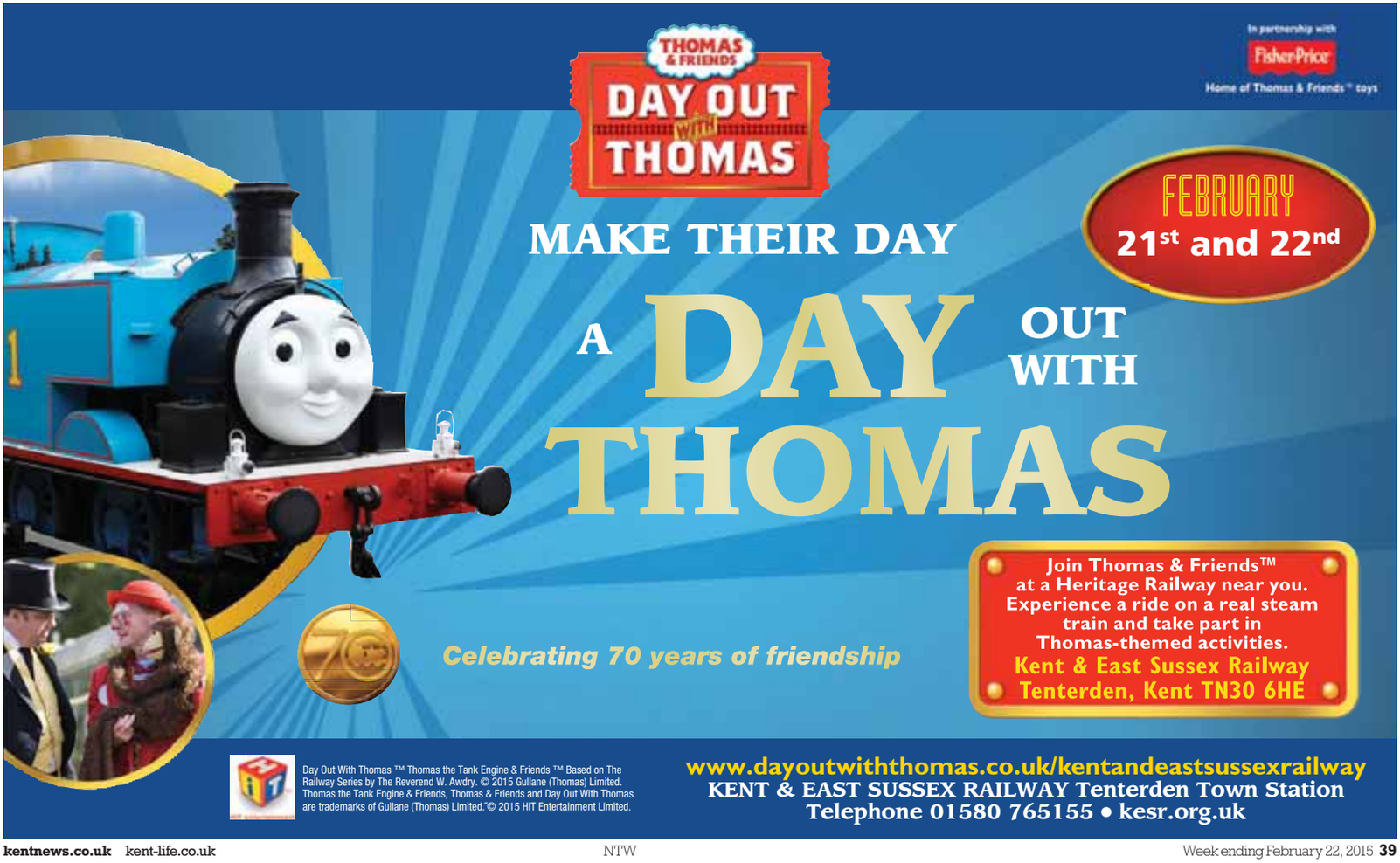
Call 01227 787787 to book.

Hitting all the right notes

CLASSICAL artist Russell Watson will perform at the Assembly Hall Theatre on May 30 at 7.30pm.

An Intimate Evening With Russell Watson will give audiences an opportunity to experi-ence his classical crossover.

For more information call 01892 530613.



A production of two halves

A MODERN interpretation of Robert Louis Stephenson's classic favourite Jekyll and Hyde is coming to Margate's Theatre Royal on March 4.

Call 01843 292795 for ticket information.

Going Fleetwood's way

FLEETWOOD Mac tribute act Rumours will take to the stage at the Assemble Theatre in Tunbridge Wells on March 2.

The band will be playing favourites such as Go your own way and Dreams.

Tickets cost between £22.50 and £32.50. Call the box office on 01892 530613.

New talent in Tonbridge

DANCERS from the Central School of Ballet will perform at the EM Forster Theatre in Tonbridge on March 21.

Tickets cost between £10 and £14. Call the box office 01732 304241.

The mysterious psyche

KNOWN as the 'master of psychological illusion', Derren Brown is bringing his new show to Dartford's Orchard Theatre.

While the content is a secret, he has said that it is his most ambitious show to date.

Tickets cost between £25 and £45.50. Call the box office on 01322 220000.

Pop legends Madness set to hit Canterbury

By Maria Chiorando
maria.chiorando@archant.co.uk

MADNESS are set to perform at the Spitfire Ground in Canterbury in September.

The gig is part of their new Grandslam Madness tour.

Frontman Suggs, who is resident in Kent said: "Come see, come see!

"The world's strongest band perform incredible feats live!

"Marvel as Madness lift an enormous set of polished pop songs high in the air, single handed!

"The UK's biggest open air tour ever is rolling into a town near you, soon."

The band will be performing their classics such as House of Fun, Baggy Trousers and My Girl, alongside some brand new songs - their first new recordings in three years.

The tour, which runs from May to September 2015, will take in 19 shows at sporting venues around the country.

These venues include racecourses, cricket grounds, rugby and football stadiums.

Kent Cricket CEO Jamie Clifford said: "We are looking forward to hosting Madness at Canterbury later this year and once again being a concert host.

"With Suggs being a Whitstable resident it will be a bit of a homecoming and I am sure people in the county will welcome him and the Madness boys with a great deal of enthusiasm.

"We are expecting tickets to sell out quickly and anticipate that this event will firmly re-establish us as one of the region's premier venues for live music."

Madness will play in Canterbury on September 11.

Tickets went on sale on February 20 online at www.ticketmaster.co.uk, www.grandslammadness.co.uk and www.lizhobbsgroup.com.

General admission costs £35. Family tickets, which admit two adults and two children up to the age of 16 years, cost £99.

The grandslam gladness beer bundle (for those aged 18 and over) costs £55.

GRANDSLAM: The new tour has a sporting angle

FRONT MAN: Suggs has been performing for several decades

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Chef Jimmy talks farming, friends and family

The star who became famous for his television shows talks about washing dishes with Jamie Oliver...

FARMER, entrepreneur and TV presenter, Jimmy Doherty has proved himself to be far more than a one-trick pony, winning a well-deserved place in the nation's hearts since his trials and tribulations setting up Jimmy's Farm were first documented on screens back in 2004.

Since then, he's appeared in a string of programmes and had success with countless foodie projects, but he's the first to admit that none of it would be possible without his hard-working wife, Michaela.

"It helps having an understanding wife, who's prepared to run the business when you're not there," he says with a laugh.

"Our business grew organically," he says. "Out of necessity, it became lots of different things.

"We started off by having a number of pigs, and then opening a shop twice a week, and then three, four times and now every day.

"Our field kitchen has become a full restaurant, and then people came to see the animals, so you have the farm park. Then people asked about getting married at the farm, so we're doing 30 weddings this year."

There's also a food and music festival, but it hasn't all been plain sailing.

"At the beginning, you have a bit more of a romantic vision of tending your animals and walking around in the evening with a glass of wine, watching the sunset.

JIMMY: Takes a moment from grafting on his farm

"That all goes out the window as soon as you get the first invoice. You go, 'Oh, the feed bill needs paying', and you forget all that romantic nonsense!

"But without that romantic element, you don't push forwards - I'm obsessed with growing vegetables and herbs at the moment.

"Now our turkeys have gone from the free-range turkey tunnels, we're using that for growing all our vegetables for the restaurant, so you're always moving on with new ideas."

Doherty grew up in Essex, and was the self-professed 'Doctor Doolittle of the village', recalling how, as a schoolboy, he used to breed and sell snakes and lizards, and washed his neighbours' cars, in order to save up and buy an aquarium.

Doherty's idyllic childhood involved having Jamie Oliver as a mate, and working in the Oliver family pub.

"One of the first jobs I had, it was probably slightly illegal actually, when I was about 11.

"I used to work in the kitchen [at Jamie's parents' pub] washing up, and Jamie used to do bottling up and then he started doing the food prep. At a very early age, you could see that that's where he was heading."

The pair are currently starring together in TV series Friday Night Feast, which sees them entertaining celebrities at their Southend Pier cafe.

"You'd never dream back then we'd be working on a show together - not those two kids running around with hair gel on their heads!"

The magic of lambing

THERE is a chance to see newly-born lambs taking their first wobbly steps during lambing weekend at the Hadlow College animal management unit on March 14 and 15.

There will also be a number of food and drink stalls hosted by produced in Kent-endorsed suppliers, as well as arts and crafts Tickets cost between £3 and £15. Call 01732 850551.

Mother's day music

THE Kentish piano trio will be statging two concerts on March 15.

The first features Haydn's Gypsy Rondo and other short pieces. The second features guest viola-player Adrian Smith taking on Mozart's Piano Quartet in G minor amongst others.

The concerts take place at Canterbury's Charlton Park. Tickets cost £6 - £15. Call 01227 831355.

Classic choral concert

THE Choral Society will be celebrating their 35th spring concert with an evening of music from Joseph and Michael Haydn.

Four professional soloists will be joining the choir for the concert and Adrian Pitts will be taking the helm as the director.

The concert is on March 21 at St Andrew's in Paddock Wood. Tickets cost £2 - £12.

Call 01892 822448.

Bienvenue a Margate

'ALLO 'Allo combines a three-course meal with entertainment.

Characters from the popular sitcom - Rene, his wife Edith and waitress Yvette plus Head of Gestapo Herr Flick and German officer Lieutenant Gruber let the drama unfold around diners.

Tickets cost £35 (including meal). The dinner takes place at Margate's Winter Gardens. Call 01843 292795.

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Chill out in the home of the blues

TRAVEL REVIEW: Nashville

by Jez Smadja

THERE'S a reason why it's called the Music City.

I've just cleared customs at Nashville International and I've already spotted Keith Urban (the country music superstar and Nicole Kidman's husband) wheeling a baggage trolley through the terminal.

He's every bit the chisel-jawed heart-throb in real life as he is on screen. But when I later mention my sighting to local residents, they simply shrug and say that seeing Keith Urban round these parts is #nobigdeal.

What else would you expect in Nashville, this genteel and unhurried yet proudly cosmopolitan city, reared right in the middle of the Bible Belt? It's a place where Southern hospitality is doled out in super-sized portions, and where the Tennessee accent, sweet like honey molasses, is strung with phrases like "y'all" and "sure is". Counting a population of 609,000, Nashville surely has more music professionals per capita than anywhere else in the world: singers, songwriters, guitar pickers, record execs, studio engineers - you name it, and every one has a celebrity tale to tell.

This is, after all, the town that launched the careers of Dolly Parton, Johnny Cash and Loretta Lynn, a town where Elvis recorded 'Are You Lonesome Tonight?' in the wood-panelled RCA Studio B. It's where Bob Dylan made Blonde on Blonde, and where countless artists have slipped their demo tapes to the execs along Music Row.

One of them was Taylor Swift, the biggest-selling artist of 2013, who's so fond of Nashville that she's bought four apartments in Downtown.

On a Monday night, there's only one place to be, and that's 3rd & Lindsley. It's a Nashville institution and that's thanks to the Time Jumpers, a loose association of seasoned studio musicians. The band's line-up changes, but tonight, wearing a forest green polo shirt, is country music legend Vince Gill.

The audience is made up of professional musicians in ten-gallon hats and country music afficionados - German singer of pop hit 99 Red Balloons among them - all sipping on beers and Tennessee bourbons. The crowd laps up Gill's swing and blues standards, and he repays them with a barnstorming version of Trouble In Mind.

Nashville is uniquely set up to market its rich country music heritage to tourists. There's a new Johnny Cash Museum off Broadway, the astonishing Hatch Show Print, where they're still making posters on hand-cranked letterpress machines a century later, and the restored Ryman Auditorium, former church and home of the legendary Grand Ole Opry radio show, before it moved to the more spacious Grand Ole Opry House.

A few blocks south of Broadway is Third Man Records, the record label set up by singer/record producer Jack White, whose move to Nashville sparked the city's artistic rebirth.

The brick warehouse lies in a former industrial district called Sobro, where the Union Pacific freight train rattles on towards Chattanooga.

The operation opened its doors in March 2009 and combines a kitchly decorated record shop with a recording studio and a 250-seat venue called the Blue Room. Here, fans have been treated to performances by The Shins, The Kills and even Jerry Lee Lewis. (The shows are recorded direct-to-acetate and vinyl copies are then sold to attendees.)

The food scene in Nashville is also hotter than a poker right now. While you can eat yourself a belt-buckle larger with Southern staples like fried chicken, biscuits and gravy, and cherry pie, there's also a lot of forward-thinking, homespun cuisine made from locally sourced ingredients.

There is also great architecture, which you can witness first hand across the Cumberland River around neighbourhoods like Five Points, Historic Edgefield and East End.

Unlike the big skyscrapers in Downtown, east Nashville has long avenues of brightly-painted bungalows, with clipped lawns and rocking-chair porches, interspersed with Baptist churches, a sign of the historic African-American community.

PICTURESQUE: The city lit up at night, and the famous RCA studio where Elvis recorded some music

TRAVEL FACTS

- Jez Smadja was a guest of Brand USA. For more information, visit www.DiscoverAmerica.com
- For more information on visiting Nashville, Tennessee, visit www.visitmusiccity.com and www.tnvacation.com

Film Reviews by Damon Smith

CAKE
(15, 102 mins) Drama/Romance

LIFE is pain cocooned within extended periods of contentment and the mundane.

At some point, we all have to contend with that exquisite suffering, which seems like it might consume us, but it's how we emerge from the blackness that ultimately defines us as strong, resilient creatures.

The embittered protagonist of Cake, played by Jennifer Aniston, has been so deeply scarred - physically and emotionally - by her pain that she is toxic to everyone who orbits her.

"Tell me a story where everything works out in the end for the evil witch," sourly jokes one of the characters.

That story would be Cake.

BLACKHAT
(15, 133 mins) Thriller/Action/Romance

FOLLOWING the attack on the computer systems of Sony Pictures last year, and leak of emails, the threat posed by cybercriminals is fresh in everyone's mind.

Director Michael Mann's polished yet soulless action thriller is perfectly timed to tap into this mood of pixellated paranoia, convening a global task force to unmask a madman who wreaks havoc from his computer keyboard.

Aided by digital trickery, Mann visualises the hack attack as a quick zoom into a computer monitor, careening along wires and circuitry as the flickering white pixels of incoming malware pollutes a blue sea of good coding.

The central romance between Thor hunk Chris Hemsworth and Chinese actress Tang Wei catalyses by dramatic necessity because she's the only woman in the film who wouldn't pass for his mother.

We don't believe their heartfelt declarations for a second. East meets west but his film goes south.

THE WEDDING RINGER
(15, 101 mins) Comedy/Romance

IT IS supposed to be the happiest day of a couple's life but a wedding is seldom the stress-free parade promised by glossy bridal magazines.

And just when it seems the worst is over and everyone can draw breath, the best man nervously stands up, microphone clasped in a sweaty palm. It's only then you realise that one man's Dutch courage is another's alcohol poisoning.

The Wedding Ringer is a sweet-natured buddy comedy of errors, which walks down the aisle with one hapless groom, who enlists professional help to ensure he gets the best best man for his beautiful blushing bride.

For better or worse, The Wedding Ringer falls short of matrimonial bliss.

By Hannah Stephenson
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

LETTUCE: Does it love goat manure?

Gardening tips through history

I'VE HEARD of some strange gardening practices over the years, but some of the tips offered in a medieval gardening book which is said to have inspired Henry VIII's lost Great Garden at Whitehall Palace take the biscuit.

The Ruralia Commoda, written in 1304, due to go on display at an exhibition at Buckingham Palace in March, claims that a squash will bear fruit after nine days if planted in the ashes of human bones and watered with oil, and that cucumbers shake at the sound of thunder.

It also mentions that lettuce loves goat manure and that combining the seeds of lettuce, radishes, nasturtium and colewort will result in a particularly tasty crop.

The book entered Henry VIII's library after the death of its owner, the King's chaplain Richard Rawson, in 1543 and explains the importance of a king's garden to the Tudors.

But just how much truth is there in its horticultural growing tips?

Guy Barter, head of the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) advisory service, says: "They didn't have squashes as we know them in those days."

Perhaps the Latin text has been lost in translation. "It would have been a marrow. Squashes come from North America, which hadn't been discovered at that time. If you watered oil on the ground it would have no fertiliser effect. It might inhibit loss of moisture by evaporation but it wouldn't control pests.

"They would have used vegetable oil as they didn't have synthetic oil in those days and it would have been broken down in the soil. But if an old-fashioned gardener wanted to give it a go, it wouldn't do any harm. Just don't use engine oil!"

The manual also suggests that lettuce loves goat manure; and Barter agrees.

"Gardeners throughout history have gathered sheep manure which is an excellent quality and balanced feed, not too high in nitrogen like bird manure and probably better than cow manure. The problem is, goats are pretty thin on the ground nowadays. If you can get hold of a goat, I'm sure there's potential there."

He is, however, flummoxed by the claim that cucumbers shake with fear at the sound of thunder.

"I've never seen a cucumber shake with fear," he laughs. "They would have been grown in cold frames covered with glass or wax. But even so, I can't imagine why a cucumber would shake with fear. There's a lot of thunder at RHS Garden Wisley and a lot of cucumbers and they've always remained rather stoic."

However, the 14th century manual was ahead of its time in some respects, declaring that combining the seeds of lettuce, radishes, nasturtium and colewort will result in a particularly tasty crop of greens.

"Those plants would all grow happily in the same soil together. Radishes are a little bit hairy, but there are versions of radish that haven't got hairy leaves so perhaps the Tudors grew those. But they would all combine well together."

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JAN 63, young at heart, petite, 5ft 2ins, brown hair, blue eyes, GSOH, likes cooking, countryside, travel, days out, seeks easy going male, 60-70. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416349**

ATTRACTIVE female, seeking single male to enhance my happy life. Enjoys travel, good conversation, walking and music. **Text Only Mailbox Box No: 4564712**

ALISON 39, petite with long brown hair, hazel eyes, very loving, seeking similar male for an uncomplicated relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416517**

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. **Tel No: 0905 002 1883 Box No: 413399**

ALISON 30, pretty, slim with long brown hair, fit and active seeks fit older male for energetic relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416497**

ADVENTUROUS sexy lady, 38yrs, married but seeks no strings fun with discreet man, any age. I'm tall, slim and dominant. Aca. **Tel No: 0905 002 1937 Box No: 415301**

DEBORAH 41, intelligent brunette, lovely brown eyes, discreet, many interests, seeks similar male to share fun and good conversation. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416515**

ANNE, mid 40's, cheerful busty cuvy affectionate real woman! Seeks gent, any age or looks for nights at mine. **Tel No: 0905 002 1953 Box No: 410291**

ATTRACTIVE black, athletic lady, varied interests, seeks similar white, old fashioned, genuine male for relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416215**

FEMALE seeking male for adult fun. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 413809**

DISCREET lady, 42yrs wants to make you happy, come to me and let me do that for you. ACA. **Tel No: 0905 002 1957 Box No: 409901**

MAY sexy black African female, 38, hardworking, seeks generous friendly male for mutual rewarding friendship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416211**

ALISON, 27 busty, shapely lady seeks fun only with broad minded man. Aca. **Tel No: 0905 002 1961 Box 416073**

SUE young at heart, good looking, enjoy life, socialising, beach walks, gardening, theatre, seeking male, 55-65 to share life with. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416171**

SUSIE, discreet married lady, young 36yrs seeks uncomplicated times with man any age or area, all texts answered. **Box No: 4459437**

JACKIE 32, attractive professional, very smart and feminine, long brown hair, seeks smart, confident, older male who knows how to treat a lady. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416297**

FELICITY, professional female, 32yrs, blonde, curvy, fun. Travels a lot and wltm chap for occasional fun on my travels. **Box No: 4459438**

BECKY 23, classy blonde, long blonde hair, blue eyes seeks loving older guy to spoil and pamper her. Discretion assured/guaranteed. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416233**

LINDY, 43yrs young, married with husband away. Seeks discreet gent any age/area for no strings. **Box No: 4459439**

LINDA 26, cheeky, curvy brunette, a little shy at first, likes to look after herself, seeks dark haired male for discreet naughty but fun times. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416195**

JENNI, sensual lady, 23yrs seeks mature experienced man for no strings, daytime fun. **Box No: 4459440**

TERESA 39, petite, cuddly and bubbly seeks kind older male to travel, have fun, and take care of, pamper and flirt with. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416081**

SALLY, 36yrs, married but husband works away seeks discreet gent any age for fun only. **Box No: 4492484**

LUCY stunning tall brunette, looking for exciting times, seeks like-minded, adventurous male who is willing to try anything once or maybe even twice! **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416079**

SAMANTHA, solvent, sensual business women, 38yrs, travels a lot and seeks fun on the road. I'm married so please be discreet. **Box No: 4495859**

PETITE blonde, blue eyes, very feminine and sensual seeks younger male for friendship and discreet fun. Can accommodate. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 416077**

JASMINE, 22yrs, seeks older gent for daytime meetings as she works a nightshift most days. **Box No: 4495860**

SARAH 29yr old pretty slim single mum of one, interesting, lively, good fun, enjoys nights in/out, music, seeking similar easy going, genuine, honest man/dad to get to know. **Tel No; 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415841**

FIONA, young 32yrs, seeks uncomplicated fun with chap any age or area, texts only please, I'm nervous on the phone. **Box No: 4495861**

ANGIE attractive nurse 39yrs, new to area/advertising, likes dog walking, being sociable, meals in/out, WLTM honest, fun male for possible ltr. looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415827**

RACHAEL, 36yrs, looking good for my age but need some daytime excitement. All text's answered. **Box No: 4507091**

LISA attractive petite Filipino female, very lonely, wanting to find love, companionship and to be happy, looking for friendship and more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415549**

SUE 65, 5ft 8ins, blonde hair, fashionable, smoker, GSOH, enjoys meals out, travel, animals, WLTM kind, shyish man for friendship, maybe more. Thanet area. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415735**

BLONDE female, 47, looking for fun, sensual, experienced, understanding, seeking similar. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415675**

INTELLIGENT funny guy without a huge ego required for damaged heart. Casey 39, size 10, curves in all the right paces, pretty, kind, loving, genuine, romantic and available. **Tel No; 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415509**

BLACK lady 43, sincere, down to earth, fun loving, likes theatre, cinema, meals out, walks, seeking white gent with GSOH, sincere and down to earth. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415477**

JENNY voluptuous blonde tanned well presented female, enjoys being and giving pampering, cooking, cosy nights, looking for some broadminded excitement. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415399**

JOYCE 39, attractive GSOH, loves nights out, honest, loyal, fun to be with, looking for mature male for adult companionship, meals out and hopefully more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415561**

NICOLETTE 32 petite professional attractive black female looking for similar hardworking white male who like me loves life and is serious about finding a LTR. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415545**

PAT blonde blue eyed curvy, cuddly female, attractive, likes swimming, gardening, holidays, my job/home, looking for happiness with quiet content grounded male. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415533**

MANDY 35, petite attractive slim female with very GSOH, likes to keep fit, meals in/out, WLTM genuine child friendly guy/dad for fun times together. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415513**

JACKIE very pretty leggy well-mannered/educated 28yr old female, loves nights in/out, sports, WLTM sincere male up to 35yrs for friendship, hopefully ltr. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415377**

DONNA 36yrs un-modest but very attractive, nice eyes, good figure, GSOH, OHAC, great job, sick of never meeting Mr Right, looking for someone special. Genuine male please. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415187**

ALISON 27yr old very bored broadminded female with plenty of free time on her hands looking for some adult fun times. Call me, I won't disappoint. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415177**

DEE lonely divorced female, slim, bubbly, attractive redhead, loves cuddles, looking for a man who can restore my faith in love and make me laugh. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414961**

JACKIE extremely sensual lady but for your eyes only! likes horses, keeping fit, gardening looking for genuine love interest and companionship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414721**

Men Seeking

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.53 per minute plus network extras. mydate24

PETITE Asian lady, slim, N/S, seeks genuine N/S male for wining/dining, fun and frolics. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414515**

KAREN 35 petite dark hair/eyed affectionate, caring, lovely female with many interests looking for genuine tlc from loving soul mate, dark haired preferred. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414487**

JULIE good looking 40's female, medium build, size 12, loveable, considerate, OHAC, likes nights in/out, walking, seeking loving male without lots of baggage. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414387**

HELEN 19yr old bubbly female looking for male to take me out and show me a good time. No pressure just fun times, no time wasters. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414223**

FREE single 25yr old busty curvy black beauty, sensual, confident, interesting, looking for handsome man to call me back. Race/age unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414219**

BLUE eyed slim pretty easy going hardworking lady seeking male to put the spark back into my life, must be honest, affectionate, have a GSOH and wont to work at a relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414217**

MO 36yr old slim blue eyed pretty blonde looking for fun times with non-judgemental, discreet, kind male. Age/status unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414215**

JANE 29, loves riding and spending time horsing around, seeking non serious kind of normal guy who enjoys going out having a good time. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414205**

KAREN young looking attractive vibrant slim blonde, enjoys to keep fit, beach walks, travel, meals in/out, good conversation with pleasant company, WLTM genuine sincere male. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414203**

SANDRA attractive lady seeking someone special to help regain my trust in the male species. Only genuine guys pls, I will be worth your time, you won't be disappointed. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414195**

TRACY 35yr busty bubbly out there sized 18 lady looking for a caring loving guy who appreciates womanly curves, over indulgences and having fun. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414189**

MARY tall blonde size 12 lady, nice personality, good conversationalist, varied and open to interests, loves weekends away/holidays, seeking similar male. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414179**

SLIM tall, elegant, feminine, N/S, solvent lady, young 50's, likes travel, red wine, seeks tall, sincere, military, retired, professional gentleman of high calibre. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414251**

WIDOW late 60's, likes most things, seeking a lonely gent, 70-75 to make me love and laugh again. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414093**

FEMALE seeking male for adult fun. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 413809**

68YR old widow, seeking company of a male, 68-75 for friendship, likes cinema, theatre, nights in, meals out, seaside walks. Wants someone to help me love again. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 413689**

FEMALE 38, attractive, African, single mum, seeks male, 35-50 for nights out, socialising, friendship and fun. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412793**

PETITE slim blonde 39yrs, pretty big blue eyes, looking for similar easygoing older male to put a spark back into my life, enjoy nights in/out and more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412327**

WIDOW 70, lonely, seeking gent, 70-75 to bring a bit of sparkle back in life, likes theatre, cinema. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412475**

KATIE 26yr old pretty slim blue eyed blonde looking for evening entertainment with open-minded discreet guy, any age. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412319**

JANE 29yr old horsey female, loves the outdoors, cycling, as well as duvet days, WLTM not too serious male for a hopefully normal relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412315**

MARY 5ft 6in size 12 blonde, nice personality, good conversationalist, interesting, lots of interests WLTM likeminded caring, happy male. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412169**

CLARE 36yrs successful single mum, independent, employed with OHAC, size 10, green eyes, pretty, likes swimming, family life, seeking male with similar values and interests. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412053**

SHARON 32yrs and still soul searching for Mr Right, I enjoy keeping in shape, caring for people, seeking loving respectful guy who also knows a good time. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412049**

SLIM petite, attractive brunette, 56, British/Russian origin, excellent cook/home maker, seeks cultured male for serious relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412129**

FREYA 33 6ft blonde, loves dancing and have a good time, employed, own home, one son, seeking similar laidback guy/dad for dates, chats and more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412045**

MARILYN really nice curvy tactile female, loves romantic walks, cosy nights in, quality times, looking for nice male to spend time and fall in love with. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411871**

JAN 5 ft 6 ins, dark hair/eyes, nice smile, likes music, travel, countryside, animals, employed, OHAC, looking for companionship with similar lonely heart. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411865**

SARAH 25 petite slim attractive blonde student, enjoys keeping fit, looking good, socialising, going out, being a mum WLTM similar fun genuine guy. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411537**

JULIE attractive outgoing female with a very young attitude, loves running, living life, travel, WLTM someone special to make my life complete, hope you're out there. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411513**

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LINDA 37, green eyes, attractive, bubbly size 12, enjoys cosy nights in, text chats, seeking tallish fun guy for meals out, pubs, clubs and spending quality times. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411033**

33YR old sick of being single working mum, OHAC, likes the simple things in life, looking for romantic, honest guy with GSOH for cosy nights in and fun nights out. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411887**

CINDY 31 attractive, size 12 brown eyed blonde, new to this but sick of passing up potential soul mate so thought I wld give it a go. ACA **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411873**

RITA divorced care worker with no ties, 5ft 1ins, dark hair, enjoys meals out, cosy nights in, seeking male 45-55 with GSOH and similar interests. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411775**

LISA busty blonde 34yr old fun to be with single party goer, looking for similar male for adult fun maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 408289**

MELANIE tall curvy attractive bubbly female who loves meals out, cosy nights in with a nice wine, walking, seeks professional male with outgoing GSOH. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411509**

LYN 34yrs, pretty petite dark haired female, loves music, meals out, quiet drinks out, seeking caring male with GSOH who can make me feel special again. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410137**

CAROLINE blonde curvy very active lady who loves to socialise, countryside, seeking similar caring male for LTR and to share good times with. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 409413**

RACHEL 39, brown hair/eyes, 5ft 6ins, bubbly, outgoing, naughty, busty, divorced, seeks male for discreet fun times. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410835**

SUE optimistic divorced lady with OHAC, good job, enjoys meals out, cinema, countryside, pub lunches, looking for likeminded outgoing happy male. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410467**

CATHY very much a lady seeks gent up to 62yrs who would appreciate an independent professional sassy female who loves to be wined, dined and romanced. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410301**

WOULD you like to bounce into Spring with me and onwards? Widow late 60's, enjoy most things in life, looking for someone to enjoy them with. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411395**

LADY 60, size 12, easy going, likes animals, seeks male for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411301**

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Mother's Day

A day to make mums feel special

From a four-course meal to free wine, ballet to beauty treatments, treat your mum on Mother's Day

THE Waggon at Hale is an independent, family-run traditional country pub on Capstone Road, Chatham.

Emma and her team are here to offer you a warm and friendly welcome, whether you are looking for somewhere to have a good old pint of real ale or a glass of wine, or to dine on our freshly prepared food, served all day every day.

We also have a large beer garden where you can soak up the sun while your children play in safety in the play area or enjoy our small farm, which includes pigs, a goat, chickens, rabbits and guinea pigs as well as Onions, the pub dog.

On Sunday, March 15, Mothering Sunday, treat mum to a four-course meal: only £22.95 and a free glass of wine for Mum. A £5 per person deposit is required at the time of booking. Bookings are being taken now at the bar.

The Waggon at Hale has a mobile app for both iOS and Android that offers exclusive offers and rewards to our customers.

Drop in at 179 Capstone Road, Chatham, Kent ME5 7PP, call us on 01634 400800 or email waggonathale2011@hotmail.co.uk.

We are open from 11am to 11pm from Monday to Friday, 10am to 11pm on Saturdays and noon to 10pm on Sundays. Food is served until two hours before closing time.

VIENNA Festival Ballet celebrate 35 years with an outstanding anniversary gala.

We are proud to present highlights from the world's most beloved Tchaikovsky ballets which have featured in our repertoire over the past 35 years.

Highlights will include the famous lakeside scene from Swan Lake, including the Dance of the Cygnets, Clara's journey to a glittering land of snow in The Nutcracker, and the legendary Rose Adagio from Sleeping Beauty. Gershwin's ground-breaking Rhapsody in Blue will also be performed, as will the highly successful Hip Hop scene from VFB's Snow White.

The Vienna Festival Ballet tours extensively throughout the UK, bringing well-known classics to both big cities and small towns.

You can see the show on the following dates: Sunday, March 15 at 5pm at the Winter Gardens, Margate. Box office: 01843 296111/292795.

Saturday, March 21 at 2.30pm and 7.30pm at the Stag Community Arts Centre, Sevenoaks. Box office : 01732 450175.

Tuesday, March 24 at 7.30pm at The Woodville, Gravesend. Box office : 01474 337774.

For more information visit www.viennafestivalballet.com

CELEBRATE Mother's Day at the Wealden Hall. The Wealden Hall Mother's Day menu comprises three courses for only £19.95 per person. Enjoy a succulent starter, a mouthwatering main and a delicious dessert from our special Mother's Day menu.

Wealden Hall is more than 650 years old; it dates from circa 1350, and is in Larkfield, near Aylesford, in Kent.

Being full of character you will find many original workings such as the beams on the first floor and three working fireplaces.

Added to this, the style is traditional inside, with part slate flooring and wooden furniture to complement the age of the building.

We welcome a mixed clientele of regular locals simply enjoying a drink and those coming to dine here.

Quality pub meals are served from a varied main menu and specials board, and you will find regular food and drink offers available.

Traditional Sunday roast is also served with fresh seasonal vegetables and all the trimmings. Choose from beef, lamb, pork, turkey, beef and turkey or a vegetarian roast, served with a large Yorkshire pudding, roast potatoes, mash and gravy.

In warmer months our large beer garden with its feature wishing well is very popular as it seats approximately 200 people.

OUR range of bedding plants is perfect for injecting colour or greenery into your space. We have a huge selection to choose from, and our team are available to give you information about any of our plants.

Whether you are an expert gardener or a novice, our team at Rosemary Nurseries will be on hand to offer you the best advice and guidance on buying garden plants. We know the best season to plant them and the top methods for garden plant care. Here at Rosemary Nurseries we also carry a good selection of climbers, roses including David Austin roses, flowering shrubs and all your seasonal bedding plants.

Hanging baskets are the perfect garden accessory for your outdoor space. Come and take a look at our range of baskets and plants for hanging baskets at Rosemary Nurseries in Margate.

Hanging baskets are a perfect solution for any size garden and are easy to look after. They can be hung from a porch or walls very simply and immediately give a colourful burst to your outdoor space. We offer a basket filling service. Bring in your baskets and select your plants for us to fill it with. We will then grow them for you and phone you when they are ready.

You will be spoilt for choice with the range of plants for hanging baskets we stock at Rosemary Nurseries. So get creative with bedding and trailing plants today.

DON'T be fooled by our name! The Hairy Monster in Sheerness is a small and very friendly salon.

Our Mother's Day offers include a blow-dry and manicure for £20, a mini-facial and blow dry for £25 and a pedicure and blow-dry for £25. Gift vouchers are also available.

We do wedding packages for hair and beauty. We do facials, pedicures, nails and shrinking violet body wraps. We also do mud wraps and massage including hot stone massage.

Carlie, our stylist, does colouring, perming, hair up, setting, cutting, and some aspects of beauty. We also offer waxing, eyelash treatments and laser tattoo removal.

We have been open for two years, and you'll find us at 193 High Street, Sheerness. We have more than 30 years' experience and are fully qualified and insured.

We are closed on Sunday and Monday, and open from 9.30am till 2pm on Tuesdays, 9.30am till 6pm on Wednesdays, 9.30am till 8pm on Thursdays, 9.30am till 6pm on Fridays and 9.30am till 5pm on Saturdays. Out of hours or late appointments can be made by prior arrangement

For more information or to book, call us on 01795 669229.

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Please include your name and address, although these will be withheld in exceptional circumstances, and a daytime phone number for verification (this will not be published). We reserve the right to edit all letters.

Protect future of closed theatre

PLEASE don't let a monstrous eyesore be built on the site of the Royal Victoria Theatre in Southborough, near Tunbridge Wells (KoS 02.01).

Very many of these small theatres which are so very old are of great historic interest to people as they imagine what the theatre must have been like inside in days gone by.

Right through to the age of variety, in the 1950s, in the days before television, people went to the theatre regularly to be entertained instead.

They gave hopefuls a chance to shine in the spotlight, which I hope will come again, one day, at the Royal Victoria Theatre if someone can manage to save it from the council's wrecking ball.

Rose Johnston,
Ightham

Philip Neame: Modest to the end

IN A recent edition of KoS (18.01), reporter Molly Kersey wrote a very interesting article about Lt Gen Sir Philip Neame VC in which his son, Nigel, explained how very modest his father was.

A visit to St Mary the Virgin's churchyard in Selling to perhaps pay respect to an exceptionally brave man, will emphasise this modesty.

His headstone reveals no 'sir' just plan Philip Neame. It makes no mention whatsoever of his VC, KBE or any other awards. Neither his French, Belgian or Czechoslavakian honours. Or, or course, the Olympic gold.

Even in death he retains his modesty.

It almost goes without stating that most of us remember the name of the mighty Winston Churchill. Well Philip Neame is another name worth remembering.

Jim Carlo,
Dartford

Crossing is like 'Dick Turpin'

I AM concerned about the new toll system the Highways Agency have put in place to cross the Thames at Dartford, and feel it is an injustice on my human rights to be fined to cross when I have the money in my hand to pay.

Reading the two options that I now have because the toll booths no longer exists are; 1. Pay on line or 2. Pay by phone.

There appears to be other options by finding a Payzone retail outlet or store locator, set up an account, or even pay by post, all these are inconvenient and never been thought through for people like me, for which there must be thousands of us.

You see I am an OAP that does not like using a telephone and does not possess all these mod cons like mobile phones or laptops.

Let's say I do not know in advance that I want to cross the Thames at Dartford and I am driving in my car and suddenly decide I want to, what am I to do?

I always keep the money for parking and tolls in a purse in my car for just that reason, but to be fined £70 if I cross when I have the money is going back to Dick Turpin's days.

I feel there must be a law some where to say it is illegal.

Peter Missons,
Lowestoft, Suffolk

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Protect our library service with petition

YOU are right that we should have "ownership" of "facilities run for the good of our communities, operated by public funding" (KoS, editorial, last weekend).

And that's the problem with Kent County Council's proposal to hand our 99 libraries to a trust.

If that happens we won't have ownership of them - we won't even be able to complain to our KCC councillors when cuts, closures or other changes we don't like are proposed by the trust.

That's why a 'Save our public libraries' petition has been launched.

The petition allows people to express a positive view of what kind of library service they would like to see maintained when councillors make their decision after the close of KCC's consultation on April 8.

The financial case for a trust is really not convincing. The savings around business rates that KCC claims will be possible will soon be eaten up by the costs of setting up a new organisation, wasteful marketing and the boss' pay packet. Then cuts and overuse of volunteers will be the next step.

The council also says that all services must take a share of the cuts they want to make. Why? A county-wide service that brings as many community and social benefits, at relatively low cost, as libraries do should surely be protected until the economy picks up.

The saving they are talking about works out about £2 per head per year - that is, the price of a half of bitter.

It is particularly galling that KCC is at the same time talking about cancelling out the saving on libraries - which are a benefit to every Kent resident - by opening a new grammar school which will serve just one small part of the county.

Libraries are a service that KCC runs well and is for the many not the few. Residents may regret the efficiency saving that their local library has already had to make over recent years, but I can't imagine any voters saying to councillors that they don't want KCC running this integrated service. It took years to build and it is certainly true that if the library service is sacrificed by short-term decisions we will never get it back again.

To sign the petition visit: http://bit.ly/1A9roib

Richard Stainton
Whitstable

Harriet's got it all confused

SEEING Harriet Harman's Barbie bus which is supposed to encourage women who are 'disillusioned by politics', reminds me of the number of times she stated, after each Labour by-election failure, 'now we're really going to listen', then cocked a deaf un'.

We're all disillusioned with politics, male and female, because we have an elected dictatorship of career politicians not interested in us, or our opinions, having the bulk of their work done by bureaucrats in the EU.

So with a national debt equivalent to £22,000 for each man, woman and child, hundreds of billions in waste, our defences being reduced and all the other nonsense turning our once proud land into something we no longer recognise, yes, we're all disillusioned Ms Harperson and if you think a pink bus is the answer, then it just shows where our real problem lies!

Phil Granger,
West Malling

Is this solution to health drive?

GLEANING is a fantastic idea (KoS, last weekend).

We have all heard tales of overweight families whose income does not stretch to afford fresh fruit and veg.

This hopefully will go a long to dispel that. We as a nation should not prevent the chance of balanced nutrition because the nearest they come to unprocessed food is a bit of tomato on a mega-fat-burger.

Hats off to those that put time in to collect it all in, and to the farmers that allow it on their farms.

It is also a travesty that there are those that have been criminalised for taking 'waste' from supermarket refuse bins, police guarding skips outside flood damaged stores when there are those who'd be glad of an apple or onion - after all once peeled or chopped, the outside shape matters not.

Steve Byers,
Rainham

Hunting ban needs review

TEN years ago the Hunting Act came into force. It was intended to end the cruel and barbaric 'sports' of using trained packs of killer dogs to chase and savage wild mammals to death, for the pleasure of a sick minority who form themselves into gangs called hunts.

Whilst the Act was a hugely important symbolic victory for the cause of animal welfare, it has proved, in practice, to be of little real utility in restraining the bloodthirsty activities of these gangs, who continue to ride roughshod over the spirit and letter of the law, much as they promised to do before it was enacted.

Some 80 per cent of the public - urban and rural - want the Hunting Act retained, but also want a law that works properly. This can only be achieved if the Act is significantly toughened up.

Alan Kirby,
Protect Our Wild Animals

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Headcorn Aerodrome

by **Paul Richardson**

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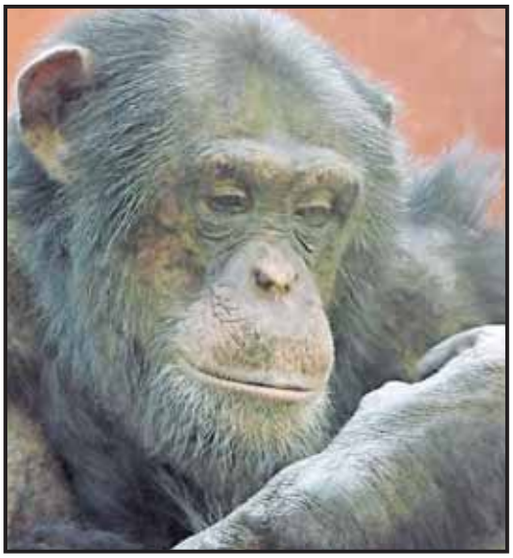
Advertiser's Announcement

Chimpanzees to Make the Move from Lab to Luxury



Wingham Wildlife Park has been working for a number of years on a project which is soon going to see 8 chimpanzees leave the Yerkes National Primate Research Center in the USA and move in to brand new luxury accommodation at the park. Tony Binskin, the managing director of WWP said, "The new enclosure, once complete, will have 2 large communal areas along with private bedrooms for the chimps, with underfloor heating throughout. Some of the chimps suffer from arthritis and this heating system is going to do their joints a world of good."

The park has invested heavily in starting work on a 12,000 square foot enclosure complete with a large outdoor planted area but are looking for help from the local community to make this home a reality for these 8 chimpanzees who are due to be retired from the research facility in the summer of 2015. In order to do so a number of fund raising activities can be found on www.winghamwildlifepark.co.uk including details of a fund raising event on 15th May which will feature live entertainment, afterhours entry to the park, a raffle games and even an auction for just £5 per person.

People who cannot make it to the event can still help support this project by donating on the parks go fund me page (www.gofundme.com/llrf2c) or following the links on their website to find their gifts for chimps amazon wish list – a great opportunity to buy specific gifts for the chimpanzees and in return (depending on the cost of the items) getting a permanent plaque on the enclosure.

Mr Binskin continued to say, "This is the largest chimpanzee move of its kind in to the UK and we are proud to be bringing them to Kent, and hope that the people of Kent will be just as excited to welcome them to the area. However we have some way to go and are trying to raise a total of £1million to cover not only the brand new enclosure but also the costly flights which will bring them over from the USA." Jackie Binskin, Tony's wife added, "These chimps are going to get a beautiful comfortable home for the rest of their lives with us, and all of them are already adults, and we hope that we can get the support to ensure that we can give them exactly what they deserve."

Apprenticeships in the county

Apprenticeships that are offering people the chance to make a difference to young people's lives

EAST Kent College is currently working with 246 apprenticeship employers in 19 different sectors. With campuses in Broadstairs, Dover and Folkestone, East Kent College is able to offer a wide variety of apprenticeship and workplace learning options to suit the needs of businesses of all sizes.

Businesses currently working with East Kent College include Pfizer, Cummins Power Generation, Ashford Borough Council, Pierremont Garage, and Quex Barn.

The apprenticeship frameworks have been developed to meet the economic needs of the communities they serve and aim to provide employers with a skilled workforce who will ultimately help to grow and develop their business.

With highly specialised staff and many lecturers being former industry professionals, you can be sure that East Kent College will be on-hand to guide you through the process and ensure that as the employer you are updated regularly on the progress of your employee.

There are also a number of government incentives and grants to help get you started on employing an apprentice. For details contact the centre for apprenticeships and workplace learning on 01843 605009 or email apprenticeships@eastkent.ac.uk.

EastKent College

HOMEWOOD School would be delighted to receive an application from those looking to be part of their enthusiastic and innovative team at Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre.

Homewood has specialisms in performing arts, applied learning and the rural dimension.

It is a happy school where pupils are made to feel welcome.

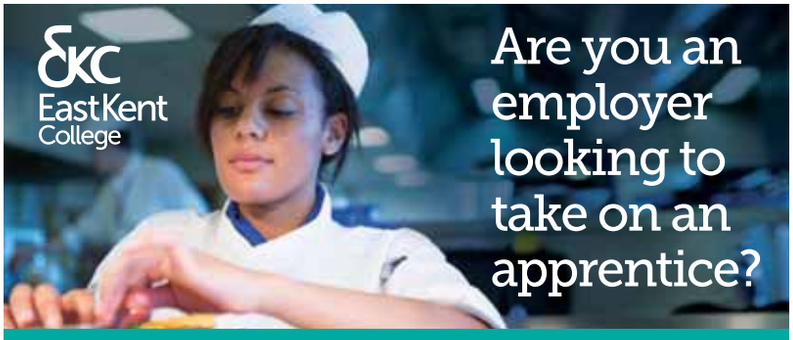
It is a mixed 11 to 18 wide ability school with academy status and 2,300 students, serving the Wealden town of Tenterden - and it is the school of choice for students from as far afield as Ashford, Cranbrook, Headcorn and East Sussex.

The school offers a varied curriculum, challenging and supporting the students so they can achieve their very best in everything they do.

The ethos is based on "learning, respect and belonging" and there are high aspirations for everyone, with everyone expected to contribute positively to the school.

Homewood School values personal strengths and qualities. Community links are important and the establishment works closely with local primary schools.

If you are successful in your application, you can be assured of a very warm welcome, and a real opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the young people of this part of Kent.



Are you an employer looking to take on an apprentice?

An Apprenticeship is one of the most cost-effective ways to develop your business, improve productivity and enhance staff retention whilst reducing training and recruitment costs.

There are also a variety of grants and government incentives available for organisations and businesses.

For more information on how we can help you please contact our Centre for Apprenticeships and Workplace Learning on:

01843 605009 or email apprenticeships@eastkent.ac.uk

Apprenticeships available:

- Accounting
- Bricklaying
- Business Administration
- Carpentry
- Children & Young People's Workforce
- Customer Service
- Computing & IT
- Early Years Educator
- Electrical Installation
- Engineering
- Hairdressing
- Health & Social Care
- Hospitality & Catering
- Laboratory & Science Technician
- Leadership & Management
- Maintenance Operations
- Motor Vehicle
- Painting & Decorating
- Plastering
- Plumbing
- Retail
- Supporting Teaching & Learning

Apprenticeships

www.eastkent.ac.uk/subject/apprenticeships

Homewood School & Sixth Form Centre

LEARNING • RESPECT • BELONGING

Principal: Mrs S J Lees MA (Oxon) NPQH

Ashford Road, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6LT
T: 01580 764222 | F: 01580 766267
E: vacancies@homewood.kent.sch.uk

11-18 Co-educational Comprehensive Academy
2,300 students including 450 in the Sixth Form

Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre has successfully run apprenticeship schemes for a variety of roles within the workplace environment.

We offer excellent on the job training and day release to attend College to attain a professional qualification whilst earning.

Our apprentices work towards qualifications and gain valuable experiences along the way. As an example of opportunities available, we are currently running schemes for Technical Theatre, Digital Media, ICT and Learning Support.

Find out more by visiting: www.homewood-school.co.uk

We are an equal opportunities employer and welcome applications from all members of the community. Homewood School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all employees to share this commitment.

driving

By Steve Loader
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

ARRIVAL: Infiniti - Nissan's luxury arm – aims to offer a different path to well-worn ones leading to German premium model showrooms

Staring into Infiniti for the arrival of a leading brand

INFINITI'S prospects on launching here in 2008 could not have looked more finite.

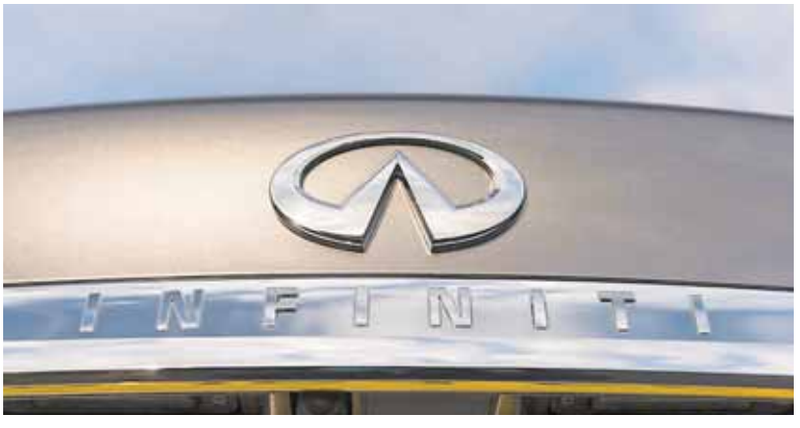
The UK was gripped by recession and car sales were tumbling; the fact that German marques were doing better than most simply showed that consumers and fleet buyers were not about to take a punt on an unknown.

However, Infiniti was not a complete no-hoper; as Nissan's luxury arm – playing the same role as Lexus does for Toyota – it had been around since 1989 in some parts of the world, but its UK debut could have been better timed and it lacked diesel options initially.

Backed by its well-established parent brand though, Infiniti has taken a softly, softly approach and managed sales through a small number of dealer centres – Kent's nearest used to be London, though a new Motorline group dealership is about to open in Maidstone.

With distinctive styling, tangible quality and a 'premium with value' well-specc'd sales pitch, the brand is making inroads.

The stalwart of the range is the BMW 3 Series-rivalling Q50 in £41,640 3.5-litre Hybrid All-Wheel Drive format, allowing bursts of emissions-free electric motoring or a potent 0-62mph in 5.4 seconds, 41.5mpg on the official combined cycle, and refined motorway cruising.



Cabin quality is high and specification generous, while the comfortable seats were designed with space age input from NASA, no less. Such benefits are also available more cheaply with the most popular and entry level Q50, with its company car user chooser pleasing 170bhp 2.2-litre diesel manual powertrain (from £27,950).

For those needing something closer to BMW 5 Series size and status, then there is the newly facelifted Q70 and a compact Q30 model arrives soon, while lovers of the SUV format can choose from the marque's SUV QX line-up starting with the QX50 (from £34,488).

» Read more of Steve's motoring reviews in…
KENT LIFE

» For more cars visit
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VW Tiguan: Many faces with one name

Volkswagen's smart mid-size SUV, the Tiguan, has an unusual name but comes in five distinct guises to attract would-be buyers with widely different needs.

YOU'LL look in vain at the VW Tiguan to see why its name is derived from blending the German words for 'tiger' and 'iguana'.

A far more relevant amalgamation is the number of different Tiguans to be found under that one name, and all with specific customers in mind.

For those who want a mainstream/premium SUV that is well-made and capable, but at the best possible price (from £21,225), then there's the 'S' entry model, whereas the best-selling Match has a crowd-pleasing spec for a bit more money – both are available with front-wheel drive or 4x4 and also in eco-friendly BlueMotion format.

But then it gets serious with three 4x4 only models; the aptly-named off-road specialist Escape, plus the Sport and R-Line flagship.

OK, the transmission system mostly runs in front wheel drive for better economy, only transferring extra grip to the rear when required, but there's enough off-road clout for most situations thanks to a shorter front overhang, radiator and sump guards, plus a standard-fit 'off-road mode' that optimises the hill descent control and other driver/mechanical aids.

Engine-wise, the three diesel options dominate but, with petrol prices looking keen – at least for now – check out the two petrol units, which deliver lighter handling and decent zip.

The 150PS (148bhp) 1.4-litre petrol option, tested here in popular Match spec (£22,885) employs a supercharger and turbocharger to deliver diesel-style pulling power and low emissions and knocks more than £1,000 off the price of an equivalent 2.0-litre diesel.

But there are no real duds in the Tiguan powertrain line-up, with refinement, composure and crisp six-speed manual gearboxes coming as standard.

The Tiguan interior is typical VW, mixing robust quality, good ergonomics and stowage and fine seating.

VW Tiguan 1.4 2WD Match BlueMotion

Price:	£22,885
Driving appeal:	★★★★
Image:	★★★★★
Space:	★★★★
Value:	★★★★
Running costs:	★★★
How green?:	★★★★
Best rival:	Mazda CX-5

Space engineering is excellent too so, despite being roughly the same size as key competitors, the car feels more spacious and has a decent boot plus lift-up tailgate.

A thoughtful selling point is how VW moved the door seals lower down and almost beneath the car, so muck thrown up on the underside is unlikely to reach the door sills and transfer to passengers' shoes and clothes as they get in and out.

From the driver's point of view, the Tiguan is one of the best in class. The ride is on the firm side, but the tautness ensures that it corners with a flat stance.

And to put you out of your misery; apparently, Tiguan was the most popular choice in a magazine competition to christen what was then VW's all-new mid-size SUV.

holidays

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Spectacular Corsica

By Eurostar from London and Ashford

2 October, 2015

10 days, £**1,199**pp • Quote: CR10-KOS

Corsica is one of those undiscovered places that appears French but feels different from the mainland in everything from customs to cuisine, language and character. Forget swanky resorts like Nice and Cannes, here you find unsurpassed natural beauty. Planted in the Mediterranean like an impregnable fortress, Corsica has amazing geographical diversity. Within half an hour, the landscape can change from glittering bays, glitzy coastal cities and fabulous beaches to jagged peaks with breathtaking valleys, dense forests and enigmatic hilltop villages. We travel by Eurostar direct to Marseille where we stay overnight. The next day we transfer to Toulon to board the ferry for our sailing to Corsica. On arrival we transfer to our hotel in Calvi.

INCLUDED: Escorted throughout • Eurostar rail travel London St Pancras to Marseille (from Ashford on request) and return TGV to Paris or Lille and Eurostar to London • 2 nights B&B in Marseille area outbound and return • Return daytime ferry between Toulon and Corsica • 7 nights half-board accommodation in Calvi • Excursions • All transfers abroad

Krakow - The Royal City

by Air 8 June, 2015

5 days, £**599**pp • Quote: PL6-KOS

Poland's delightful city of Krakow, known as the Royal city, is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a must-see destination for all travellers. Staying in a modern 4-star centrally-located hotel, we are just steps away from the Medieval centre with its vast array of bars and cafés, lively and vibrant squares and markets, Renaissance arcades and Baroque structures. Accompanied by a fully-licensed guide we will explore Krakow and beyond with visits to the renowned, UNESCO listed, Wieliczka Royal Salt Mines and an optional visit to Auschwitz.

INCLUDED: Escorted throughout abroad • 4 nights half-board stay at a 4-star hotel in Krakow • Excursions • Return flights with luggage from Gatwick to Krakow - supp't may apply • Transfers abroad

French Riviera - Cannes, St Tropez & Monaco

by Rail - afternoon departure - 6 June, 16 & 24 Sept, 2015

7 days, from £**769**pp • Quote: CD6/9-KOS

Come with us to one of the world's most photographed coastlines and home to so many iconic locations from the glitz and glamour of Cannes, St Tropez and Monaco, to the tranquil beauty of Sainte Marguerite Island, where the Man in the Iron Mask was incarcerated. Enjoy all the sparkle and grandeur starting with a glass of Champagne at St Pancras and a night in Paris or Lille en-route to our 4-star hotel in Cannes.

INCLUDED: Escorted throughout • Champagne check-in • Return rail travel from St Pancras (from Ebbsfleet on request) to Cannes • 1 night hotel B&B in Paris or Lille • 5 nights half-board stay at a 4-star hotel in Cannes • Excursions • Transfers abroad

Rhine in Flames & Moselle River Cruise

by Rail or Air • 22 September, 2015

8 days semi-all-inclusive, from £**889**pp • Quote: RN9-KOS

This fun-packed cruise visits historic riverside towns including Cochem, Rudesheim, Koblenz and Boppard, where you will experience the wine festival and see the Rhine in Flames. Originally held to celebrate the grape harvest, this spectacular pyrotechnics show features an illuminated flotilla of riverboats and curtains of fire, bathing the scene in a magical glow. We have chartered the lovely mps Amsterdam exclusively for this cruise. With just 98 guests and a cosy, friendly atmosphere, this will surely be a cruise to remember.

INCLUDED: Escorted throughout • Return rail travel from London St Pancras (Ebbsfleet on request) to Brussels and coach transfer to Cologne or return flights to Cologne - supp't may apply • 7 nights full-board cruise on the mps Amsterdam sharing a twin outside cabin (TCB) on Main Deck - upgrades available • Captain's 5-course dinner • Beer, wine, & soft drinks served at lunch and dinner and from 6pm to midnight at the bar • Entertainment • Transfers abroad

Ferrari - Live the Dream in Maranello

by Air • 25 June & 15 October, 2015

4 days, from £**499**pp • Quote: FM6/10-KOS

Come with us to Maranello in Northern Italy - home to the most famous sports car maker in the world - Ferrari. Our 4-day tour takes in all the sights of Maranello including the Ferrari Museum, Viale Enzo Ferrari and Fiorano Test Track. We also visit the Enzo Ferrari Museum in Modena and we stay at a 4-star Ferrari themed hotel. No trip to Maranello would be complete without taking a Ferrari out for a spin. Test drives are possible at extra cost with options to drive a range of models, including the new California and the 550 Maranello.

INCLUDED: Escorted throughout abroad • 3 nights B&B at the 4-star Maranello Village Hotel • Return Easyjet flights Gatwick to Bologna with hand luggage • Excursions • Transfers abroad

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We are looking to recruit an enthusiastic and committed person.

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HEAD OF EDUCATION OFFSITE (EOS)

West Heath is seeking fully qualified teacher to lead our offsite education team The successful applicant will need to have experience of managing teams as well as having outstanding organisation and communication skills, Networking with community organisations and writing appropriate learning packages for our West Heath students are all part of the qualities we are looking for in this post.

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young adults.
Successful candidates will be subject to an Enhanced DBS check

Applications and JD can be found on the web-site www.westheathschools.com

Contact **lynne.mcgrath@westheathschool.com** or tel: **01732 460553** if you have any questions

Closing date for applications is **2nd March 2015**

Spencer PRIVATE HOSPITALS

Spencer Private Hospitals are two hospitals situated in East Kent. The larger of the two hospitals is a 22 bed independent hospital situated at the QEQM Hospital in Margate, whilst the second hospital is a 4 bed independent hospital based at the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford. Both hospitals have a reputation for providing excellent medical and surgical facilities supported by Specialist Consultants, Specialist Nurses and Physiotherapists. We have state of the art diagnostic equipment and exceptionally high standards of nursing care.

The continuing growth of our business has resulted in a vacancy for the following staff:

Administrator – Ashford

Full time Hours: 37.5 per week Closing date: 06/03/2015

Salary: £17,088.88 per annum

Qualifications and Experience

- **Maths and English GCSE A – C Grade**
- **2 years' experience working in an administrative environment**
- **Audio Typing experience**
- **Excellent IT Skills (Word, Excel, Booking systems)**

To discuss this opportunity, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact: Nikkie Cooke, Patient Administration Supervisor on 01233 616201

For a job description and application form please visit www.spencerprivatehospitals.com/careers

Alternatively, please contact Justine Whittle, HR Assistant
Telephone: 01304 245943
E-mail: recruitment@spencerhospitals.com

Spencer Private Hospitals is an equal opportunity employer.
This position is subject to a Disclosure and Barring check.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

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Spencer PRIVATE HOSPITALS

Spencer Private Hospitals are two hospitals situated in East Kent. The larger of the two hospitals is a 22 bed independent hospital situated at the QEQM Hospital in Margate, whilst the second hospital is a 4 bed independent hospital based at the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford. Both hospitals have a reputation for providing excellent medical and surgical facilities supported by Specialist Consultants, Specialist Nurses and Physiotherapists. We have state of the art diagnostic equipment and exceptionally high standards of nursing care.

The continuing growth of our business has resulted in vacancies for the following staff:

Staff Nurse - Ward – Ashford:

Part time Hours: 30 per week Closing date: 6th March 2015
Salary: £23k-25k (pro rata), dependent on qualifications and experience

Qualifications and Experience

- **Registered Nurse 1st level**
- **Evidence of continual professional development**
- **Experience in a surgical/medical environment with a knowledge and understanding of surgical/medical procedures**
- **Excellent communication and interpersonal skills**

To discuss this opportunity, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact: Liz Justice, Ward Manager on 01233 616256

Staff Nurse - Ward – Margate:

Full time Hours: 37.5 per week Closing date: 6th March 2015
Salary: Dependent on qualifications and experience

Qualifications and Experience

- **Registered Nurse 1st level**
- **Evidence of continual professional development**
- **Experience in a surgical/medical environment with a knowledge and understanding of surgical/medical procedures**
- **Excellent communication and interpersonal skills**

To discuss this opportunity, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact: Mary Guarnieri, Ward Manager on 01843 234249

For a job description and application form please visit www.spencerprivatehospitals.com/careers

Alternatively, please contact Justine Whittle, HR Assistant
Telephone: 01304 245943
E-mail: recruitment@spencerhospitals.com

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You must be able to communicate well both verbally and in writing.

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or email: **employment@archant.co.uk**

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You must be able to communicate well both verbally and in writing

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PLANNING

Folkestone Hythe & Romney Marsh Shepway District Council

THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) ORDER 2010

The following applications have been submitted for consideration by the Council:

Y15/0128/SH# - 12 Ness Road Lydd Romney Marsh Kent TN29 9DR - Works to trees situated within a conservation area comprising the reduction by approximately one third of a Sycamore and a Conifer

Y15/0118/SH - 4 Undercliff Cottages North Lane Sandgate Folkestone Kent - Alterations to external finishes of a dwelling house in a conservation area.

Y15/0092/SH - 2 Walnut Tree Mews High Street Hythe Kent CT21 5LW - Formation of a first floor balcony to the rear elevation.

Y15/0119/SH - Land Opposite Lisheen The Undercliff Sandgate Kent - Felling of a Holm Oak subject of Tree Preservation Order No. 3 of 1973

Y15/0112/SH - Land Adjoining West Wedge Sandgate Esplanade Sandgate Kent - Section 73 application to vary condition 2 of planning permission Y11/0537/SH for the erection of two, four storey blocks comprising ten flats in total, following excavation of the site together with parking below and associated engineering works, in order to allow an increase in the overall height of the building by 750mm, reduce the lower ground floor area of the building, and omit the tandem parking layout, provide increased refuse storage and secure cycle provision

Y14/1411/SH - Land Adjoining Hope All Saints Garden Centre Ashford Road New Romney Kent - Outline application for up to 117 dwellings, new proposed vehicular access arrangments, parking, flood attenuation, open space including the retention of 0.7 hectares of existing playing fields and associated works.

Y15/0125/SH+ - Tin Tabernacle Portland Road Hythe Kent CT21 6FL - Works to trees situated within a conservation area comprising: pollard back to previous pollard points of eleven Holm Oaks and crown reduce back to previous pruning points of one Holly; one Elm and an Ornamental Plum.

Y15/0094/SH+ - Nickolls Quarry Dymchurch Road Hythe Kent CT21 4NE - Section 73 application to remove condition 12 and vary condition 57 of outline planning permisssion Y06/1079/SH (mixed use development) - removal of condition 12 to enable development to take place without the construction of a pumping station at Grand Redoubt; and variation of condition 57 in relation to the provision of off site highway improvement works.

Y15/0107/SH* - 13 Clifton Crescent Folkestone Kent CT20 2EL - Change of Use of Hotel (C1) to mixed use Hotel (C1) and House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) (C4)

Representations can be made in writing either on line on the Council's website, by email to planning@shepway.gov.uk or in writing to the Head of Planning and Environmental Health, Shepway District Council, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2QY. Please always quote the application reference number. Comments should be made in writing within 21 days from the date of publication. Please note that any representations received will be publically viewable on the Council's website.

Some applications can be viewed at other locations in addition to the Civic Centre, Folkestone. The applications are marked as follows:

- The One Stop Shop, Magpies, Church Approach, New Romney

\+ - Hythe Town Council Offices, Stade Street, Hythe

The applications marked (*) do not accord with the provisions of the development plan in force in the area in which the land to which the application relates is situated.

Note: This is not a full list of applications received. All planning applications can be viewed and comments made online at http://searchplanapps.shepway.gov.uk/online-applications/.

C Lewis, Head of Planning and Environmental Health
Shepway District Council

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LEGAL AND PUBLIC NOTICES

APPLICATION FOR A PREMISES LICENCE UNDER THE LICENSING ACT 2003

Notice is hereby given that Country Butchers (Kent) Ltd of Tudor Lodge, Augustine Road, Minster on Sea, Sheerness ME12 2LZ has applied to Canterbury City Council for the GRANT of a Premises Licence for the sale of alcohol from 06:00 to 20:00hrs every day. The above for the premises Alworths Butchers and Artisan Foods, Broad Oak Farm Shop, Sturry, Canterbury CT2 0NJ. A register of licensing applications can be inspected at www.canterbury.gov.uk/licensing or at Council Offices, Military Road, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1YW tel. 01227 862000 by appointment with the Licensing Team between 10am and 4pm Monday to Friday. Any person wishing to submit representations to our application must give notice in writing to the address shown above, giving in detail the grounds of objection by 13/03/2015. The Council will not entertain representations where the writer requests that his identity remains anonymous. Copies of all representations will be included in the papers presented to the Licensing Panel and will therefore pass into the public domain. Representations must relate to one of the four Licensing Objectives: the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and the protection of children from harm.

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

David Armstrong trading as Armstrong Haulage of 11 Medway Road, Crayford, Dartford, Kent DA1 4PN is applying to add an operating centre to keep 4 goods vehicles and 5 trailers at Plot 4, Burgess Business Park, Crabtree Manor Way South, Kent, DA17 6 AD

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF, stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's Office.

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Golden Lizzy now aims for Worlds

Championships in Germany to get under way this Monday

FLYING HIGH: After her gold last year (above), this season has seen the European title added to her remarkable haul

Pictures: ADY KERRY

Skeleton

By Chris Britcher
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VALENTINE's Day is becoming something of a rather special occasion for Lizzy Yarnold. But not for the reason you might assume.

Instead, it seems, the West Kingsdown winter sport queen has selected February 14 as the day on which she secures a vital career-enhancing win.

In 2014, it was the day she flew around the ice track in the Russian city of Sochi to win gold in the Winter Olympics and elevate the skeleton event to household status in this country.

Now, precisely a year later, she did the same again - flying around the very same circuit to break the hearts of her competitors and secure another vital triumph.

She may have finished second overall in the World Cup ratings, but her victory over rival Maria Orlova saw her secure her fourth World Cup gold medal of the season.

It was a strong way to end the final skeleton World Cup event of the season.

If it had not been for a dizzy spell which forced her to sit out the meeting at Calgary, she may be celebrating winning the overall crown for a second straight year.

Now her sights are set on the World Championship as she seeks to make a remarkable piece of history.

The 26-year-old has already won the European Championship this season, and is now looking to add to her medal haul at the championships which start in Winterberg, Germany, on Monday. She said: "It would be an honour to be the first Briton to hold the World, Olympic and European titles together.

"I'm feeling really motivated.

"Being European champion was a huge goal of mine, I desperately wanted to add that crown.

"It was one of the goals for the season and the other one is the World Championships so it's been a really, really good day."

Looking back to last weekend, she added: "I do love the Sochi track. I've done a lot of runs here as we had 40 runs here before the Olympics.

"Even though I made a lot of mistakes I was able to relax and enjoy the track."

When Yarnold won the gold in Sochi last year, she returned home to a hero's welcome on an open top bus (as pictured). Success again in the worlds will cement her star status.

Calls for Treadwell return to ease CWC blushes

ENGLAND's selectors opted against drafting in James Tredwell for Friday's crunch Cricket World Cup clash against co-hosts New Zealand and paid an almighty price.

Now the pressure is growing for him to be named in tonight's squad to face Scotland.

Should England slump to the cricketing minnows in Sunday's game, which starts at 10pm UK time, it would deliver an enormously humiliating blow to Eoin Morgan's side.

Defeat would leave them rock bottom of the qualification table and staring down the barrels of an early elimination.

Having been hammered by co-host Australia in their opening game - losing by 111 runs - the chorus for Kent spinner Tredwell's inclusion became louder.

NOW? Is this the time for Tredders to return to the England one-day side?

Among those insisting he should be included were former England star Nick Knight, convinced he would provide the variation in attack England lacked.

He said: "Tredwell has been England's most reliable one day bowler and reliability is what they need now.

"There is not much turn on these pitches but big playing areas and plenty of cover can encourage Tredwell to employ his strength, which is to toss the ball up and get batsmen coming at him. He has an excellent change of pace and an ability to outthink batsmen."

But on Friday morning the nation woke up to news Tredwell had been overlooked... and New Zealand had thrashed England by eight wickets - chasing down England's total in a little over 12 overs.

England's next world cup match will be against Sri Lanka next Saturday evening.

Sport Shorts

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Edinburgh's delight at extension of loan deal

GILLINGHAM boss Justin Edinburgh has spoken on his delight at securing an extension to the loan deal of West Brom left back Bradley Garmston.

The Premier League club approved an extra month on his stay at Priestfield on Monday.

He will now be available for the Gills in their continued push up the League One table until March 15.

Edinburgh said of the 21-year-old on the club's website: "He has improved with every game and the belief in himself is starting to show. I am absolutely delighted that West Bromwich Albion have allowed us to keep Bradley for a further month.

"He knows he has to be on his toes because in Joe Martin we have somebody equally impressive and will push him, so it's very good to have that level of competition."

Garmston initially joined the club on January 16 and has so far made seven appearances for the club, scoring once.

Gills travelled to Yeovil on Saturday in their League One clash.

PLEASED: Justin Edinburgh

HOST: St Lawrence will welcome Geoff Miller in April

Miller to deliver key State of Play address

FORMER England all-rounder and selector Geoff Miller is to be the star turn at a major black tie event at Kent's headquarters.

He will deliver the keynote speech at Kent Cricket's State of Play dinner which takes place on April 9 in the Harris Room at the St Lawrence Ground in Canterbury.

The former Derbyshire and Essex player played 34 Tests between 1976 and 1984 before becoming England selector from 2008 to 2013.

Diners can expect tales of England's Ashes wins and the World Twenty20 triumph, whoopee cushions and maybe even anecdotes about Kevin Pietersen in the wake of his controversial KP book.

Unless there is a big improvement, the miserable showing in the current Cricket World Cup may well be high up the list for discussion too.

The three-course meal includes champagne and canapés on arrival, beer, wines and a cheeseboard for £100 per person or £850 for a table of ten. To book, call Tanya Nicholls on 01227 456 886.

Wildernesse tees up for the Open

SEVENOAKS' Wildernesse Golf Club has been chosen to host regional qualifying heats for the Open Championship for the next five years.

The club, which has previously hosted a number of prestigious competitions, will hold the first on June 22. It last held regional qualifying status between 1998 and 2003.

Andrew Lawrence, secretary at the club said: "We are delighted. The club is very much looking forward to welcoming the many professionals taking part in the tournament and hopes that by playing a part in the Open, in our 125th year, it will encourage new visitors."

The Open is held this year at St Andrews.

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